THE WILMINGTONS.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TWO OLD MEN'S TALES,"

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," ETC.

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PART I.

THE WILMINGTONS.

CHAPTER I.

In song the spring comes welling
To-day, from out the grass;
And not a hedge but's telling
Earth's gladness as you pass.
Far up the bright blue sky
The quivering lark is singing;
The thrush, in copses nigh,
Shouts out the joy it's bringing.—W. C. Bennett.

It is a trite observation, and yet one of those which it does not seem useless perpetually to reiterate: how great is the extent of mischief produced by the indulgence of what are commonly called, and what people are more especially inclined to call in themselves, venial faults.

Another observation, perhaps equally trite and equally worthy attention, is recorded by Miss Edgeworth in the proverb prefixed to one of the most incomparable of her incomparable tales, "Barring Out," that "the mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing."

For true it is, that the weakest, and shallowest, and most contemptible among human beings, as regards understanding; and the emptiest, and vainest, and most trifling as regards heart and character, powerless as they may be to effect much good, even under a right direction, may yet prove very mischievous under a wrong one. The moral to be drawn from these observations is still more trite than the observations themselves. I leave it to be inferred by those who honour me in being my readers, and proceed to my tale.

A lovely wood, in the loveliest time of the English year, when May has just merged into June; when the oak is still in its golden or crimson spring tints; the beech yet silken and of a tender green; the ash putting forth its soft leaves, and the anemone, the blue hyacinth, the lychnis, and the white stitchwort in flower; and the fairy groves of bilberries under our feet, are hanging forth their little rose-coloured bells: and as happy a party are sitting together in this wood, and enjoying this delightful time of the year, as ever sallied forth, basket in hand, to gather cowslips in the meadows, or explore the brown horrors of the forest.

They are in their several periods of life just of the ages when such delights are most exquisitely enjoyed.

Wordsworth, in a poem, the beauty of which has rendered it almost too commonly known to bear a quotation, has celebrated the lovely lights that play round the imagination of the child and the youth, diffusing such a heavenly glow upon the aspect of external nature; and he has compared it to the ineffable brightness of the early dawn of day. Were I gifted with the power of expression which belongs to the poet, I could have been tempted to add something to the beautiful lines—

> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing boy;
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows;
> He sees it in his joy:
> The youth who daily from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

I would have wished to have added, for the consolation of those who, under that fervid and arid noon, look back with fond regret upon the hours of dawn, that as the light descends and the sun of life sinks slowly to the west, colours and lights more beautiful than all gather round the closing day.

That the man, as he travels onward, when the heat and turmoil of the noontide hours are at an end, beholds those heavenly visions of the morning with a something more sober, yet more beautiful and tender still, welcoming, as it were, his return to the regions from whence, "trailing clouds of glory," he originally sprang; once more those finer imaginations which, in the active and stirring business of middle life, had faded into "common day," return to bless the wea-

ried labourer, and to glorify the evening of his hours before he sinks to his final rest. Whilst the soft dew of evening falls, and the quiet moon rises over the eastern woods, the nightingale sings the requiem of the sun as he disappears amid the gathering curtains of the night.

To return from this effusion to plain story:

The little party assembled in this lovely wood, upon this most enchanting day, consisted of a set of young people, still children, and of one aged gentlewoman.

There were some servants in attendance at a little distance, which showed that the party belonged to a class in the higher walks of life; but the ease, gaiety, and simplicity of the little set proved that they had inherited its refinement and escaped all in it that was false or artificial: had profited by its privileges, and escaped its snares so far, at least. And this happy exemption was chiefly owing to the character of the aged lady, to whom her rank and dignity, combined with her character and temper, gave such a powerful influence in this circle of human life.

I am one of those, and I believe my taste has been shared with some of the finest painters the world has ever possessed, who have the greatest admiration for the beauty of old age.

The beauty of old age is perhaps more rare than that of any other time of life: I mean fewer attain to the beauty which adorns the hoary head; but when it is possessed, it is the most noble or the most lovely, because it is the most truly spiritual and most truly moral of all beauty. Other beauty, though probably in a great degree dependent upon, and certainly in a great degree enhanced by moral qualities, is yet in many respects an accident of forms and colours; but the beauty of old age is the *résumé* of the life of the man. Upon that time-worn countenance the passions and the faults, the virtues and the feelings, the tenderness, love, benevolence, or envy, covetousness, selfishness, and rage, have written their characters in ineffaceable lines; and beautiful it is to see, as we often do, faces actually plain to ugliness in their youth, gradually expanding into beauty under the influence of goodness, sense, and worth; the eye brightening into a serene clearness; the lines of the countenance assuming a heavenly refinement and repose; the whole face glorified with a sweetness and loveliness not of this world. And it is the reverse—and, alas! I fear more frequently—when the lovely features that delight us in youth gradually lose their charm, as the insipidity of vanity, the scowl of disappointment, the dulness of vacuity, the sharp thin lines of vicious

excitement, or the grosser ones of sensual enjoyment, gradually obscure what once was.

My old lady belonged to the class I have first spoken of. Whether she had been a beauty or not in her youth I never inquired, but she was indeed beautiful now. She had been a large fair woman once, and of stature rather above the common size; but now her form was bent with age and with sorrow; for it was plain she had known sorrow. What child of man, who possesses a feeling heart, attains her age without much sorrow? But whilst those traces of frail humanity were observable in both her form and face, the same form and face revealed how well that sorrow had been endured; how well the fiery strife which leaves its scars upon life's toil-worn soldier had been fought. They told how calm had been the courage, how noble the resignation, how serene the victory; what tenderness had softened so much strength, what anguish endured with so much fortitude; how energy had been combined with composure; how much goodness, sympathy, and love, had dwelt there.

Her hair was snow-white, her eye clear blue: that frosty blue of old age, to me so peculiarly beautiful; her skin, so delicately fair, adorned the wrinkles of her face. This, it may be said, is almost the only accidental beauty of colour which remains to old age; and she possessed it. Her thin withered lips bore an air of indescribable sweetness and kindness; relieved from insipidity by that expression of acuteness, fun, *malice*, which produces, so combined, in an aged face, something of the same pleasurable effect as when seen in a clever little child.

She was dressed in black silk, with a white satin quilted bonnet and a white cloak. She was sitting upon the raised turf, under a magnificent tree, with her ivory-headed ebony staff lying beside her, surrounded by the children. These last were extremely busy, sorting, and dividing, and arranging great heaps of flowers which they had been gathering, and which lay prettily intermingled among them. There were five of these children: three little boys and two little girls.

One of the boys and one of the girls were grandchildren of the duchess, for that was the old lady's worldly title; two others connected in a certain very remote manner with her; the third, a schoolboy friend—a pale, thin, sallow, large-featured, rather heavy-looking young man, dressed in rather an ungainly manner, in a green coat and pink-striped summer waistcoat—sat reading under a tree, at some distance from the rest.

We must of course give precedence to rank, even in children; and so I have the pleasure to introduce you first to Lord George Tempest, a boy about ten or eleven years old, and as handsome a young creature as you have often seen. He was a regular beauty of the Norman race, as it is the affectation of the times to say: a regular beauty among our beautiful aristocracy, he had a right to be called. Features at once manly and delicate; eyes of the darkest blue, almost black in their cloudy splendour; hair curling like the bells of the hyacinth, and of the most sunny golden brown; with a slender figure, formed for elegance and action at once, and promising to be just so much above the common height as to be distinguished, without being too tall; lips like cherries, and the face full of fun, spirit, and good humour. Such was this dear young Lord George.

He was an imaginative being, though a mischievous, petulant schoolboy, and, consequently, he already fancied himself in love; and it was with his little cousin Flavia, who sat by his side almost buried in flowers. She was an active little creature, and had gathered a huge nosegay by her own exertions, which now lay upon one side of her; whilst another, twice as big, was upon the other, gathered by her indefatigable adorer—her knight, her squire, her slave—Lord George.

They were very busy together; for she was an orderly little thing, though full of fancy, as she was full of goodness and feeling; and she was sorting and arranging the confused heap of treasures that lay around her, and so absorbed that she seemed as if she could think of nothing but her flowers.

A little way from her, but upon the same side of the circle, we come to Harry. He is a plain, rather heavy-looking boy, certainly not cast in an aristocratic mould; his complexion is sun-burned, his features are coarsely cut; his motions too are usually more awkward, and his speech more slow and confused, than they were need to be, for he is excessively, painfully shy. He is, however, at present completely engaged in what he is about; and with gravity worthy of a more important occasion, is arranging, re-arranging, tying up and untying, a nosegay of the flowers he has collected; endeavouring to please his own eye by his arrangement, but in vain. Poor Harry Wilmington, even so early, experiences what it is to be one of those hapless beings who possess a taste beyond their powers of execution, and therefore is destined to be dissatisfied with himself and with all his performances. Thence his self-distrust, his hesitation, his awkwardness, his painful sense of timidity and shyness, when in the company of those

he admires: admires with all the fervour of a most sensitive disposition, and most vivid perception of the excellent and the beautiful in all things.

Opposite to Harry, and at a very short distance from the duchess, whom she perfectly adores, sits Caroline. A fine brown gipsy girl, larger and stronger-looking than the rest, with nut-brown clear eyes, full of strength and intelligence, dark-brown hair cut short in a crop, and a cheek finely proportioned, but colourless as that of a Spaniard. She is not making nosegays; she has got some grasses and a book, and is studying to make them out, assisted by a thin, delicate-looking, fair-haired boy, with complexion transparent as the finest porcelain; soft pink colour in his cheeks; sweet, intelligent blue eyes, which are both tender and melancholy; and a mouth that one would hardly think could belong to a boy, so gentle, so almost plaintive is its expression. He is called Albert Selwyn by the others, being the schoolboy acquaintance of Harry, who, as sometimes happens, is always Harry in and out of school. Now, we must know who these children are, and their connection with each other.

Lord George is the duchess's grandson, descended from her eldest daughter, now a widow, her husband, the Earl of Sandown, having been some time dead, leaving this boy with a very slender younger son's portion. His elder brother, who has inherited the estates, being much older, is now abroad, travelling with his tutor; and as he probably will appear no more in this history, we may as well dispose of him at once.

He married abroad, and spent most of his time afterwards there, to the injury of the rightful pretensions of his fair countrywomen "on the market," in the first place, and of his tenants, dependants, and the country under whose laws and protection he inherited and held his property, in the second. The mother of Lord George had a plentiful jointure, and led a life of the great world; spending every farthing she possessed, and indeed rather more, upon herself and her son. In consequence, he had now, and continued to have for some years, much more money to spend than was at all good for him; but his tender mother, who perfectly adored him, was ever lamenting his miserably slender inheritance, and resolved that, at least while she lived, he should not know what privation was. She therefore spared no expense to secure for him luxuries and enjoyments that heirs of even very large fortunes are often denied. So that handsome, good-hearted, lively Lord George, is in danger of being spoiled, I am afraid; and so thinks his good grandmother, and remonstrates, and even lectures, and strives with all her might to undo the evil

effects of such a system; with what success we shall presently see.

Flavia is the daughter of the duchess's third daughter, and is dear and precious above all things to the good grandmother's heart; for she has lived very much with her. The mother had married a Welsh squire, that is to say, a Welshman with a good deal of landed property in Wales; but he was not, like most Welsh squires, a man of high family. His father, or perhaps himself, I forget which, had considerably added to a small estate by successful trade; so that when Lady Margaret married him, it was regarded as rather a derogation to her high dignity; and though she had fallen in love with the young man, or his plentiful fortune, so she thought herself. However, he died soon, and left her with this one little girl, heiress to all his wealth. But the mother hated trouble and loved dissipation, and the care and attention necessary to educate a little solitary child, under such circumstances, was quite beyond her; so the task had chiefly fallen upon the good duchess, who was one of those who stood by, ready to step in and atone for the deficiencies of others. She had spared no care or exertion to rear this little plant properly; and such care and exertion always result in making a child doubly dear. But Flavia is indeed a very nice little thing; gay, innocent, affectionate, simple-hearted; a laughing, loving child, yet full of character; with something determined, which had been doggedness in her mother, softened by her own natural pliancy and softness. Lord George loved her dearly, both as cousin and as a young imaginative boy. He thought her quite an angel, and his mother encouraged the feeling by every means in her power; whilst the good grandmother, though too wary and too well-principled to encourage this nascent attachment, or influence the affections of either in any way, could not help feeling a certain complacency when she saw them thus sitting busily occupied together, apparently forgetting the existence of every one in the world but themselves.

Harry was the son of Mr. Wilmington, the rich City merchant—the prosperous, the *millionnaire* Mr. Wilmington; and also, it may be added, the very handsome and brilliant Mr. Wilmington; the idol and the star among a very numerous and wealthy, if not a very tiptop circle. He had married a daughter of a distant relation of the Welsh squire; and thus was, in a very remote degree, connected with the duchess; a connection, however slight, in which he took the greatest pride. Such a gossamer thread of union would, however, in all probability, have long ago vanished from all recollection

upon the one side, had not the memory of it been kept up by the accident of Flavia L—— and Caroline Wilmington being educated at the same school.

Mrs. Wilmington had been, almost from the time of her marriage, in a declining state of health: a circumstance which left her gay husband to pursue his objects, either of business or pleasure, very much alone: a thing to be regretted; for his wife, who was sensible and serious, a woman of simple tastes and of a quiet and reserved disposition, might have acted as a very useful check upon his rash, sanguine temperament, and as a mute censor upon that unbounded love of expense and display in which his plentiful fortune allowed him to indulge almost without limit.

His children, luckily for them, had, however, been left almost entirely to the guidance of their mother. Of Caroline the gay father was proud and fond. She was a clever, spirited, handsome little thing; always ready with a lively answer to many a sportive attack, and with spirits equal to any of the schemes of pleasure he might have in view for her. As a little child, she had seldom been sick, and never cross.

Harry was none of these things. As a child, he had been ugly, tender-spirited, of feeble health, and consequently rather fretful temper. As he grew older, the ill health and the fretfulness had disappeared; but the effects of the constant checks he had received from his too thoughtless father remained, and, acting upon a most sensitive disposition, and a most simple, humble, and affectionate heart, had produced all that shyness, timidity, and self-distrust which obscured so many latent good qualities.

Selwyn was the orphan son of a merchant, belonging to that mercantile aristocracy of honourable, long-descended, commercial houses which fill so high a place in our mixed society. He was heir to a very large fortune, and there was another in expectation. His mother had been sister to that Mr. Craiglethorpe, who, it was reported, was now making his millions in India, though he had left England somewhat late in life.

It was Mr. Craiglethorpe's only brother, Thomas, who sat under the tree reading.

Selwyn was being educated at the same school with Harry and Lord George, with the former of whom he had contracted a close intimacy, which was ripening into tender friendship. These two sensitive and feeling, and, we may add, suffering hearts, grew together; for though Selwyn had not that bashfulness, shyness, and awkwardness which dis-

tressed Harry, being a remarkably gentlemanlike boy, though silent and quiet, yet the extreme delicacy of his health ill fitted him for the strifes and difficulties of a large school; and his sufferings would have been great, if it had not been for the support and assistance of Harry, who, with all his social timidity, was physically and morally brave as a lion, and, when roused, courageous as a hero. He had fought many a hard battle in defence of his friend; and had done more, for he had defied the general ridicule by the tender, almost womanly attentions which he paid to the wants and comforts of the delicate and suffering boy.

This friendship had become quite a proverb in the family; and wishing to please Harry Wilmington, the good duchess had invited Selwyn to join this little party, which she had assembled round her.

Flavia and Caroline were returned for the holidays from Mrs. Steelcollar's establishment: a highly fashionable seminary, to which Caroline had been sent much against the wishes of her mother, and Flavia equally against the opinion of her grandmother. But the resolution of Mr. Wilmington, most anxious for his daughter's progress in all those external accomplishments which in his opinion her mother prized too lightly, and of the worldly-minded Lady Margaret, had prevailed in both cases; and these young people had been brought more closely together, considering the slenderness of their connection, and the different circles of society in which they seemed destined to move, than would otherwise have been the case.

The two girls, though Caroline was some five years the senior in age, had become greatly attached to each other; and Flavia had made it her first petition upon her return home, that Caroline might be invited with her brother Harry, of whom she was so very fond, to spend the first weeks of the summer holidays at Castle Delaval.

Harry had seen Flavia several times before, when she had been allowed to come home for a day with Miss Wilmington; for, as her mother had the honour to be, though distantly, allied to her father's family, in spite of Mr. Wilmington's city connections, Lady Margaret could not, in decency, refuse Flavia's earnest entreaties to be allowed to visit her friend.

Harry was no brilliant, precocious boy like Lord George, and he never ventured upon those flattering speeches to the pretty little girl of which the other was so lavish: he only displayed the more fervent admiration with which his boyish heart was filled, by eyes fixed upon her in silent reverential

tenderness, as upon some being belonging to a sphere quite beyond his own, and by his very timid attempts at rendering her any little service, for which the opportunity might occur: whilst, unluckily, poor fellow, the very sensibility of his heart acted, as it too often does, on one so sensitive, in an adverse manner; producing a more than usual awkwardness in his motions, and hesitation in his voice whenever he addressed her. Caroline was vexed to see her darling brother appear to so little advantage, but was too young to understand the nature of such feelings; and her animated remonstrances and evident mortification upon such occasions, did not tend to mend the matter. The good old duchess, who had penetration enough to discover the sterling qualities possessed by the boy under this somewhat homely outside, succeeded, however, better in her endeavours to encourage him. She could in secret have wished, perhaps, that her darling and brilliant grandson could have united with his other engaging qualities, something of the modesty, the gentleness, and the unaffected simplicity of Harry's manner; but this would have been, indeed, to combine contradictions, and she knew the thing was next to impossible. Yet she could not help every now and then falling into the mistake of holding up to Lord George something in the light of an example, the boy he looked down upon as infinitely his inferior in every respect. This did Harry no good service in the eyes of the other: he looked upon any proofs of this preference above himself as a most crying injustice; and was not so much inclined to be jealous of Harry, a feeling he would have thought infinitely beneath him, as to regard him with a certain dislike, as the cause of a partiality which he thought so injurious to his own claims. With this feeling was mingled a little schoolboy jealousy of his admiration of Flavia, which, though Harry in his pride and delicacy endeavoured to conceal, he was too artless not to betray unconsciously upon almost every occasion.

Lord George had, however, little cause to envy Harry the place he held in the little lady's favour: her preference for himself was as undisguised as were all the other innocent emotions of her honest little heart.

"Well, Harry," said the duchess, after a long silence, during which she had been observing him, "you have taken infinite pains with that nosegay of yours; you have tied and untied it twenty times, I think. I have been watching your attempts, and admiring your patience; and now it is at last done, it looks extremely pretty; but you keep holding it in your hand. Do you mean it only for yourself, after all?"

"Oh, no!" stammered Harry; "only—I don't know, I don't feel sure."

"What don't you know? What don't you feel sure of?"

"Whether she will think it, after all, worth having."

"She! Who?"

"Miss Flavia."

"Yes," said the good-natured old lady; "I am sure she will, if you mean it for her, and think it as pretty as I do. Here, Flavia, my dear."

But Flavia heard not. She and Lord George were very much too busy to listen to anything but their own rapid and animated prattle.

"Come hither, Flavia." But Flavia did not even turn her head.

Harry looked at them, and then at his nosegay, and then at the duchess.

"Thank you, ma'am; but perhaps she wouldn't like it."

"Why not? Any one must like such a beautiful assemblage of flowers; and you have taken such pains with it, too. Flavia, my dear," raising her voice a little, "do you not hear me? Look what a beautiful nosegay of flowers Harry Wilmington has made for you!"

"For me, is it? Oh, what a beauty! Come and sit here, Harry," said the little girl, making room for him. "Look, George, what a beauty!"

"Do you call that a beauty? It's tied together as if it were going to be sold by the bunch in Covent Garden market. Do you call that a nosegay? Here, hand it over to me, Flavia, and let me look at it."

She gave it to him: he took it, and surveyed it scornfully.

"Well, to be sure, here is a taste!"

Harry's countenance fell: his spirits were unfortunately so tender as to be daunted in some things by the merest trifles. The duchess watched him with interest, and said laughingly, in order to encourage him—

"I am afraid, dear George, you are a sad conceited fellow, and fancy nobody can do anything well but yourself; even to the tying-up of a nosegay he would fain be considered incomparable," said she, turning to Harry. "I hope this ambition may extend to objects of more importance. In the mean time, my dear, you must not trouble yourself with the fancies of little girls," she added, seeing Flavia drop the nosegay upon the grass by her side, with an air of indifference. "At that little girl's age we have no idea of having a taste or opinion different from those we love."

The last sentence was not exactly adapted to console the

proud and feeling boy. He rose from the ground, and retreating, walked quietly away through the bushes by himself.

And then he watched the trees playing in the soft summer wind, and the white blossoms of the mountain-ash bowing and rising again, and filling the air with sweetness, whilst the birds were whistling and chirping and singing, and nature all so harmoniously beautiful. He walked on, musing, and heard the laughter and the talk going on behind him, and felt how lonely he was, and how different from other people; and then a deep sense of discouragement laid hold of him. He was nothing, and should be nothing. No one on earth seemed to care for him but his mother and Caroline; and his mother was far away, and Caroline seemed absorbed by Selwyn. What was he now to any of them? But, indeed, what was there in him that he should?

Presently he heard the bustle as the company departed from the place they had been occupying, and gradually the hum of voices, broken by the merry and exhilarating laugh, died away.

Then Harry returned to the spot which they had quitted, and there he found his nosegay left neglected upon the ground. He was far from resenting this neglect as a piece of injustice, as Lord George would have done infallibly in his place; but he felt it acutely, and in a manner beyond his years. He, however, preserved his youthful dignity and composure, walked quietly to the place, took it up, and, going to the side of a brook which ran sparkling and gurgling through the hazel-bushes hard by, he deliberately dropped it in, and watched it, vexed and tossed by the whirling stream, till it disappeared. Then he returned to the house in apparent tranquillity, but more sore of heart, more depressed in spirits, by such a trifle, than one could have thought possible.

CHAPTER II.

Hold not my passion's offering poor;
Trust in a true heart's worth;
Ay, more than all the tinsel shows
That dazzle the dull earth.—W. C. Bennett.

No doubt this visit, in spite of the kind encouragement of the duchess, was upon the whole unfavourable to the development of this sensitive character.

In company with Lord George, so brilliant, handsome, high-spirited, and arrogant (or rather, perhaps, I should use the French word, *avantageux*), for Lord George, though too good-natured and too easy in his temper strictly to merit the term arrogant, had certainly that high sense of his own advantages which often exercises a very depressing effect upon the spirits of others; in his presence, the only other boy being Selwyn, whose gentleness, elegance, ease, and refinement of manner forbade him appearing in unfavourable contrast with any one, Henry felt more than ever the depressing sense of his own defects and disadvantages.

The ambition of pleasing seemed in danger of being lost with the hope of succeeding. He was too gentle-tempered to become morose, too highly-minded to be quarrelsome; but, dissatisfied with himself, and ill at ease, he moped about, leaving the others to their enjoyments. Lord George and Flavia seemed ready enough to make themselves happy, without paying the least regard to him in any way, but not so his sister and Selwyn.

The children were the rest of that day busy building a fairy's bower; and having constructed a pretty sylvan cave, with twisted living branches and boughs of trees, they were busy ornamenting it with the flowers they had been collecting. Lord George had already installed Flavia as Queen of the Fairies, and was decking a throne for her with the nosegays they had tied up. The little girl was busy and pleased; Caroline and Selwyn were ornamenting the walls of the bower; they were all laughing and talking, and all very

happy. Suddenly Caroline stopped, turned round, looked at Selwyn, and said—

"Where's Harry?"

"Where is he?" responded Selwyn. "He came out with us. What a pity, Caroline, that he is so dull and melancholy!"

"He is always quiet at home, and sometimes melancholy; yet in general Harry is a happy boy, though so grave; but he grows quite gloomy here. I wonder what is become of him?"

"Shall we go and look for him?" said Selwyn.

"No, you stay here, and let me go alone."

She took up her hat, which lay by her upon the ground, tied it over her dark hair, and then looking, as Selwyn thought, like the most beautiful gipsy he had ever seen painted, left the bower in search of her brother.

It was a wild, copsy, tangled wood, and now the glorious month of June; the blue hyacinths enamelled the ground beneath like a pavement of lapis-lazuli, varied by patches of the lovely white anemone. The clear, bright sun penetrated the yellow and red transparent leaves of the oaks, the beeches waved their silken tendrils in the soft wind, and the dark, shining hollies sparkled in the light, whilst the birds sang in the branches of the hornbeam and the hazel. It was the loveliest of summer days. The young heart of the girl swelled with a lofty pleasure as she gazed around, and imbibed, as it were, the genius of the woods, and lifted her dark, serious, earnest eye to the heavens, and thought of that Being whom her mother had from earliest infancy directed her to seek in all things; and the grandeur, and the beauty, and the love—His grandeur, His beauty, His love—seemed flowing in a rich stream of goodness above, around, beneath her. And her heart, so good, so earnest, so deeply serious, swelled responsive to it; and as she threaded those green sylvan labyrinths, it gushed to words in an extemporary hymn of praise. These were Caroline's most fervid, most delightful moments. She was one of those who, from their very infancy, have imbibed that higher life which lifts the creature, as it were, above the cares and the vanities, without unfitting it for the affections and the duties of this life. There had been from a child, if the word will not appear misapplied, but I can find no other, something of the sublime about her.

Caroline had been the most generous, the most self-devoted, the most self-denying among children; the most seriously indefatigable at her studies, because she looked

upon them as duties; the most faithful to truth; the most strictly honest, temperate, and serene of little girls; and the most scrupulous in the performance of her childish offices of devotion. Added to all this, she was most warmly affectionate in her feelings, both to her father, her mother, and above all, to her brother. She loved her father for his good nature and indulgence, with all that overflowing gratitude, even for small kindnesses, of which characters like hers are so fully capable. She loved her mother with a reverence approaching to awe, looking up to her as to some superior being, whose wisdom and virtue inspired her with an esteem beyond words; her brother, with a mixture of tenderness, admiration, and compassion. With sympathies so strong for all that was righteous and good, with a sound sense such as that which she possessed, she had early discerned and almost worshipped the dawning virtues discoverable even from his earliest childhood in the little boy, who was four or five years younger than herself. Gifted with that discernment of character which some children so strangely display, she understood him perfectly. She estimated, if no one else could, how hard it must be for him to adhere, unflinchingly as he did, to his truthfulness, his principles, his high sense of what was right, in spite of the bashful shyness which made every moral effort so painful and so difficult. She understood the deep sensibility of his feelings, which neither father nor mother saw; she discerned the burning sense of shame with which he received his mother's reproofs: reproofs that Caroline could often perceive were founded upon a misconception of his motives and intentions; or the painful sense of embarrassment with which he endured his gay father's sarcasms upon his manners and appearance. She could see how cruelly he was wounded by injustice or unkindness, and could appreciate the temper and the fortitude with which he endured what was to him a source of such exquisite pain. She loved him dearly as her only brother; she loved him with enthusiasm, as in her opinion, the most excellent of human creatures; she loved him with the fondest tenderness, as to her an object of the gentlest sympathy and compassion. She loved him as one from whom she felt she should receive, were it needed, all that support which woman seeks in man; and she loved him as the being, in some respects almost childishly, dependent upon herself for tenderness and happiness.

And it was under the influence of this feeling, blended of the mother, the elder sister, and the guardian angel, the monitor and the comforter, that she now, soothed by the

whispering spirit of the woods, wandered along looking for him.

She came to a green alley cut where a double line of towering elm-trees made a lofty verdant arch, which arch the sky only suffered the rays of the sun to flicker through upon the grass. He was slowly walking there with his back turned towards her.

She went up to him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder before he perceived her, for he was deep in thought, his head dropped upon his breast, and looked very downcast. But he turned round, and a brightness spread over his face as he looked at her. He had been feeling, in his melancholy, as if quite alone, as if nobody cared for him; that dark phantom which haunts the young in their desponding hours; and here was that dear, dear sister close at hand, looking at him with the affectionate, anxious look which comforted him when he was sad or sorry.

"My dear Harry, why will you run away from all the rest?" she began in a tone of gentle remonstrance; "do you know it is not very wise to indulge these moping humours? and I am sure it can't be very pleasant. Come," putting her hand under his chin, and endeavouring to turn his face, which he had averted, towards her, "confess you are sulky about something or another, and yet you would give the world to have done with it, and be among us again. Only you feel as if there were something grand in such a mood, and it is so awkward to descend from one's altitude. Do tell me, dear Harry, what's the matter with you?"

"It's only the old thing, that I am a great fool to care."

"Yes, that I'll be bound you are. But what do you care about? What has vexed you?"

"Oh! Caroline, don't ask me! I'm ashamed of myself. I think there never was such a stupid ass as I am."

"Oh! that's quite an old story, Harry! Of course you are. But that's not the reason you look so disconsolate; because, if it is, I wish you'd take my word for it, and not your own, and then you would never call yourself ass again."

He smiled.

"Ah! that's right, it's going away. Come, come along; we've got all our flowers out; we put them in water yesterday, and you cannot think how pretty the bower is. Lord George is making such a beautiful throne for Flavia, and the child is in extasies. Where's your nosegay that you made yesterday?"

"She didn't care for it; she wouldn't even look at it. Lord

George persuaded her that it was not worth having, and no more it was; so I threw it away."

"I am sorry you did that; you would have been glad to have had it when there was a use for it; but it doesn't much signify."

"Oh, no!" and he turned away.

"But it does signify to him, I see," said Caroline to herself. "That overbearing Lord George! Why was not Harry's nosegay as good as his own, I wonder? Because it was his. I see that. But Harry shall have some flowers to give Flavia that he can't get. Come, Harry," speaking aloud again, "come along, and never mind your slighted nosegay. You shall have one the day after to-morrow, that Lord George himself shall envy, and have the pleasure of presenting it to the fairy queen, who is to be crowned upon that day. Only, dear, dear brother!" laying her hand kindly upon his shoulder, and stooping down too, for she was a good deal taller than he was; "dear brother, I wish I could persuade you to be true to yourself, and to resist these low, melancholy feelings which, indeed, indeed, only expose you to the slights and insolence of others, and which I am afraid, much afraid, may end by permanently weakening your character, Harry."

"I feel so miserably awkward; so wretchedly shy."

"Ay, that is it, and this will grow upon you, my dear boy; but don't let it grow upon you; resist it, vanquish it! Come, now to begin, do come and work at the arbour, and never mind that foolish, conceited Lord George: he thinks himself worth ten of you, and you are foolish enough to let him make you almost think so yourself, when he is not fit, no, not to hold a candle to you. I can't bear to see it, Harry; I cannot indeed: your spirit has been cowed as a child, I know. They did not quite understand you. It was bad; but it matters little, so you do but understand *yourself* now, and fight with this low-spirited feeling of yours. Indeed you can do it if you will but try. If you will but learn these precious words, 'Don't care.'"

"'Don't care' shipwrecked Harry upon the coast of Africa," said her brother, looking up at her and smiling.

"I don't know how that might be," answering the smile with a look of the tenderest affection; "but '*do* care' shipwrecks many a precious vessel upon the shoals of society. Young as I am, I have found out that," she said, gaily. "Come along."

By that post Caroline wrote to her father:—

"Dear Papa—We are all very happy here, for the duchess is excessively good-natured, and this is the loveliest place you can conceive. Such immense woods! Woods are so different from shrubberies; and they are so unimaginably beautiful, and quite full of wild flowers and all manner of lovely trees; and such abundance of birds! for the duchess does not allow the birds to be shot; so her woods are a land of refuge for all 'the feathered choir;' and it's lovely early in the morning to see and hear them so happy and so busy. We have found loads of nests, and I have got a collection of eggs, some very curious, and a great many new flowers for mamma's herbal. The duchess is a delightful old lady; not the least grand or proud, as I thought all duchesses were, but such a reverend, gentle person, and so gravely dressed! I was quite surprised; I expected her to be so fine; but she is not one-half so fine as Mrs. Emerson's mother, or Mrs. Emerson herself, and more in mamma's taste about these things, which I think you will be glad to know. And there is such a set of ancient, gray-haired servants. I wish we had gray-haired servants; you can't think how respectable and nice it looks, as if they were old friends; and the duchess's own maid is quite an old woman, and stoops actually, and is so plainly dressed. Flavia is prettier than ever; but I do not see so much of her as at school, because she is quite taken up with her cousin Lord George, who is here, of course, and I don't like him much. He's good-natured enough, but he's arrogant, and seems to think himself too good for his company. I don't care the least bit in the world for this, neither does Selwyn. We both know very well we are not born to be lords and ladies; and if they don't care for us we're both very like the miller (but the good duchess is not a bit arrogant); but it vexes me sometimes for Henry; because Henry, though he has a noble spirit within, yet you know he is so shy and distrustful of himself, and Lord George takes advantage of his humility and his modesty, and *dashes* him. He seems a good-natured boy in the main, in spite of his faults, but he has taken a sort of spite, I think, to Henry. It's about Flavia, I think; only that would be too foolish, for Flavia evidently does not care the least in the world for Henry, and is never happy without Lord George. However, now I come to the end of my letter, and what I want you, dearest papa, to do. There's been something about a nosegay, and I think Lord George was ill-natured and insolent, and despised Henry, because his nosegay was not so handsome as his; and I won't tease you with particulars, but

what I want is, a very beautiful nosegay to be sent to Henry out of our hot-houses (they have no hot-houses, except for grapes, here); something that Lord George could not sneer at, and that Henry might have the pleasure of giving to Flavia, and that Flavia would like to have. I dare say my feelings are very foolish, and perhaps almost wrong about all this, but I cannot help wishing it very much; and if you would do me the great favour to send Henry a splendid nosegay of hot-house flowers, or some very fine heaths would do, but I'm not sure if they are not over, you would, dear papa, oblige, very much indeed, your affectionate daughter,

"CAROLINE.

"There's going to be a sort of Fairy Queen Feast the day after to-morrow. Please send the flowers to be here that day morning early. Dear love to mamma."

The answer:—

"MY DEAR LITTLE CHARMER OF A CAROLINE—Thank you for your long letter. I am glad you are happy, and that the duchess is so kind to you. By your account, that Lord George seems an insolent jackanapes, as most of the Nobs who have fallen under my observation are. I'm sorry Harry is such a lout. By your letter, I guess he is rather more so at Castle Delaval than even at home, where he's more awkward a good deal than enough. However, he's my son, and not to be borne down by anybody, and you were quite right, and acted like the dear, sensible, spirited girl you are, to write to me; and to-morrow Harry will receive such a bouquet as I think few lords or dukes either, can present to the fairest Fairy Queen in the land. I went through our own houses, but not content with that, I have been to three or four in the King's Road, and I have taken the trouble myself to select the very rarest and choicest things that were to be had; and my boy shall have a nosegay that royalty itself might be proud to receive; and then your Lord George may scoff as he will, and be ready to bite his fingers off for mere envy. But tell Harry, with my love, that I sent him to school to learn to make his own way, and not to look mealy-faced, and as if he were frightened out of his seven senses when he comes across strangers.

"My darling Carry's loving father to command, you little witch,

"EDWARD WILMINGTON."

Proud was the young girl, far too young, and far too confiding, to distinguish all that might have been distinguished in this letter, and grateful beyond measure to the indulgent father who had so generously complied with this request.

Upon the appointed morning a box arrived, directed to Henry Wilmington, Esq.; and Caroline had the extreme delight of seeing her brother's surprise and pleasure when he opened it and beheld an enormous bouquet, composed of the most expensive and lovely flowers that it was possible to gather together. The rarest orchidaceous plants, in all their fantastic variety of forms and most dazzling colours, the rarest and finest geraniums, camellias, roses, ixias, gladioluses, everything that was most rich and beautiful. The bouquet was tied together by a silver ribbon, and surrounded by a paper border, cut and painted, and gilt and ornamented like a French fan. Caroline thought the flowers little needed this addition, which, to her taste, rather diminished than enhanced the extreme beauty of the nosegay; and so might Harry have thought, had he not been far too much pleased to be critical. Selwyn was summoned to admire the flowers and rejoice in their possession; and the Fairy Queen being already seated upon her throne, the three came down together, Harry carrying his present, with an air of bashful pride, the two others following.

Caroline had insisted upon Harry presenting his nosegay himself, and he consented; but when he entered the arbour, his usual shyness overpowered him, as he saw the duchess sitting there; and going up to Flavia, who, crowned with a little chaplet of roses, her white frock looped up with flowers, was already placed upon her verdant chair, he pushed rather than presented the flowers to her, saying—

"My father sent me that, and it's for you," coloured high, and retreated.

But the rapture of the little creature restored him to himself.

"Oh, George! oh, grandmamma! what beautiful, beautiful, curious, curious flowers! Oh, Harry, how very, very kind!" stepping off her seat, and lugging the great nosegay to where the duchess sat; "what beautiful, curious flowers! See, here's a butterfly; you may touch it. Ha! ha! ha! it isn't alive, it's a real flower; it can't fly away: pretty butterfly! See, here's a beetle; look at this monstrous thing. Oh! dear, but there's a real bee in that rose; what a monstrous rose, and how excessively lovely!" And she clapped her hands, and kept walking round and round her grandmamma, upon whose lap she had laid the flowers.

The duchess praised and admired; Caroline and Selwyn stood by and smiled, and Harry was in a state of mingled embarrassment and pleasure; Lord George stood aloof, proud, angry, jealous, and gloomy.

Flavia soon took her nosegay again in both hands, and saying, "Now, I am to sit and hold it. Sha'n't I look like a real queen, Harry? Caroline, help me to get up again," returning to where her elevated seat was placed. "George! what's the matter with you, George?" said she, suddenly struck with the gloomy expression of his face; "what's the matter? Do come and look at this loveliest nosegay which Harry has given me."

"I don't want to look at the nosegay; what do I care for nosegays?" said he, in a low voice and irritated tone, as she went up to him; "but I suppose you do, and more, perhaps, than for anything else in the world. I suppose you'll love Master Harry best now. I can't get you such nosegays."

She cast up her pretty eyes to his—

"Oh! George; as if that would make any difference."

And, more anxious to satisfy the feelings of her cousin, than to show her gratitude for the pains that had been taken to please her, she was soon too much occupied with him to cast a thought or a look upon the giver.

Lord George visibly triumphed; and the three were vexed and disappointed, inclined to be angry at the little ungrateful one; but they ought to have loved her better, because her love was not to be bought.

CHAPTER III.

Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe,
Our hermit spirits dwell, and range apart;
Our eyes see all around in gloom or glow:
Hues of their own, fresh borrow'd from the heart.
T. E. READE.—*Revelations of Life.*

BUT now Caroline was summoned away, and Selwyn returned to his friends, and Harry remained at Castle Delaval for a week alone. This was a terrible time to him.

Left alone with Lord George and Flavia, exposed to the rude schoolboy jests and rebuffs of the one, and wounded by the careless indifference of the other, in vain he endeavoured to practise the philosophy which his sister had recommended. His spirits sank lower and lower every day; and his consciousness of this, his sense of his own infirmity, his secret vexation at his own want of spirit, excited that self-dissatisfaction which makes one feel as if the scorns and neglects he meets with are but his due. He was more solitary and unsociable than ever; indeed, the other two left him mostly to himself. They were busily engaged in their own schemes, and took little notice of him, except that Lord George could less than ever resist the temptation of trying his wit upon so tempting a butt; for Harry could seldom rally his spirits sufficiently to parry his sarcasms with a ready answer, and usually took refuge in silence. Sometimes Flavia would seem to take little pleasure in these exhibitions of her cousin's wit; at others she could not help laughing, George was so droll. And, oh! how bitter was that little childish laugh to Harry's feelings! At such times the somewhat stolid equanimity which he strove to maintain was overset; the colour would rush to his cheek; the tear he scarcely by all his efforts could keep from mounting to his eye; and he would rush hastily away. The loud exulting laugh of Lord George would follow him, ringing odiously in his ears. Then would he bury himself in the thickest of the copse, and, hidden from every eye, would sit there moping for hours.

The duchess, mean while, saw that the boy suffered, and

it vexed her much. She had early, as I have said, discovered under this unpromising outside how many valuable qualities lay concealed. She endeavoured to cheer him by the kindest attentions; and the few hours in each day that he passed with her were comparatively happy. But in vain did she try to recommend him to her grandchildren, and vainly did she point out the attentions which, in their own house, common politeness demanded. Children are usually insensible to every conventional claim. Lord George unscrupulously resisted her wishes, declaring Harry to be the most intolerable bore he ever met with in his life, and saying openly that he was not going to have the last week of his holidays spoiled for him.

Flavia seemed to think it a terrible piece of injustice that George's holidays should be spoiled for any creature upon earth, and fully entered into his view of the intolerable hardship it would be for him to be dancing attendance upon that stupid mope of a Harry Wilmington, instead of carrying out all the thousand pleasant schemes in which he was engaged with her; schemes in which the little girl was his most docile and obedient slave, doing exactly what he bade her, however inconvenient, fatiguing, or painful to herself, with the utmost facility. Lord George was, in fact, four or five years her senior; and though he admired and loved her beyond measure, in his way, it was in *his* way, and in the way of many others older than himself; that is to say, with much less regard to her happiness than to his own.

Sometimes, when she was quite fagged and worn out with being his horse, or his lion, or his hare, or whatever his fancy might please her to be, she would complain very gently, and ask him when he would have done play, for she was so hot she hoped he would not be very long; and he would answer:

"Oh, you dear little thing! don't pretend to be tired. You can't be tired. I'm not the least tired in the world. Come; tally-ho! off with you, or I shall cut you up where you stand."

And then Harry, who frequently stood by a silent spectator of these scenes, would feel his heart glowing with indignation. But he dared not interfere; first, because he was sure there would be a loud brawl if he did, and that would offend the kind duchess; and, secondly, that he was sure, if he ever hinted at blame to Lord George, Flavia would instantly and warmly take his part, and be more hot and angry than even he could be.

He used to content himself with bringing her strawberries

or water in a china cup, when she stood unharnessed in her stable under the laburnum-trees, after a long run in George's cabriolet; and Lord George would allow this, and call him "Tom the tiger," or "Charles Dickens's fat boy," or "Tony Lumpkin;" which insults, though they could not drive Harry to abandon his labours of love, effectually took all the sweetness out of them.

"Oh! dear, dear George! don't ask me to run again; I am so very, very tired," remonstrated the poor little pony; as many another poor little pony might do, if it had tongue to speak and tearful eyes to add force to the appeal.

"Well, now, Flavia, just when I've finished this new harness; only look how I've contrived it! and there's a real little saddle for your back, just like Grey Gilbert's harness."

"But I don't like to wear a saddle, a real saddle, upon my back," said the little girl, looking disgusted and half-terrified; "I'm not a real pony."

"Nonsense! You ought to make yourself as like a pony as you can, or what's the use of my playing at horse-and-carriage with you at all? You're growing quite ill-natured, Flavia; I can't think what's come to you; but I'm not going to put up with your childish whims. You engaged to come out and play at pony; and here I've been all this morning making this saddle: so, come; gee whup! stand still! let me put your harness on, or you'll have a taste of my whip, little Colonel; see if you don't."

"No, no, George!" with a look of terror; "pray don't."

A child of that age has a horror indescribable at the idea of being touched by the whip.

"Then do as you are bid, or I'll be as good as my word: see if I won't. You grow quite provoking."

"And you grow so cross; and you're tyrannical."

"Say that again, if you dare. Tyrannical! I'm sure that word's been put into your mouth. Tell me this moment, Flavia, who dared teach you to call me tyrannical? I'm sure I care for you more than anything in the whole world; but I won't bear your whims and tempers more than anybody's; and I won't bear to be called names, and, above all, 'tyrannical.' It's no word of yours. Who put it into your mouth? Was it that great Tony Lumpkin; that envious, awkward booby, Harry?"

"Oh, you're there, Master Harry!" suddenly turning round. "What brought you here, if you please, sir?"

"I heard you talk of using your whip to Flavia," said Harry, doggedly, "and I came here to tell you I wouldn't suffer it."

"You not suffer it! What business have you to interfere between me and my own cousin, Master Jackanapes? Go about your business, you city put," cried Lord George, in a passion; "don't meddle with us."

"These are your grandmother's grounds, and you may do and say what you please to me; but in no grounds and no place will I stand by and see a little girl tyrannised over by a big boy," said Harry, sturdily; for his blood was thoroughly up.

"Tyrannised! tyrannical! Oh! you've taught her the word; I thought so. Take that, for meddling between me and mine!" cried Lord George, passionately, endeavouring to strike him. But Harry parried the blow, and the next moment laid his rival at his feet.

The blood gushed from his mouth and nose.

Flavia, who had stood by almost petrified with terror at the scene, looking, in a bewildered manner, first at one and then at the other, at this spectacle uttered a scream of horror, and calling out, "Oh, you naughty, wicked boy! how dare you? You have killed him!" threw herself upon the ground by her fallen knight, and tried to raise his head, calling out, "Oh, George! are you hurt? Are you hurt? Are you killed? Wicked boy! Where is it? Are you killed?"

"No; it's only my nose bleeds a little," said Lord George, getting up from the ground, and taking her in his arms and kissing her. "You're a dear, generous little creature, Flavia; and how could I talk of whipping you? I'll never do it again, believe me; and as for that fellow who threw me down, why, it's truth I struck at him first, and so he'd a right; and I'm not much hurt. Here, Wilmington, there's my hand, it you like; but mind what I say: if you ever dare come meddling and mixing between Flavia and me again, I'll thrash you, sir, that I will, though I were to fall dead the next moment after doing it."

It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon Harry by this scene and by this speech, or the confusion of thought which it had produced.

With a temper such as his, no effort cost him so much as the one he had just made. To put himself forward to interfere in the concerns of others was always repugnant to him. He had been worked up to energy by his indignation at the tyranny which Lord George, in spite of the love he professed, was continually exercising over this little girl; and the idea of his venturing to threaten her with the lash had roused him into a paroxysm approaching to fury. He had felt all this for her; he had stepped forward to defend her

from wrong and avenge her injuries; and this was the return from him and from her. From him, a sort of generous forgiveness; from her, nothing but looks of mingled dread and abhorrence as regarded himself, and of love and pity as regarded his rival.

From that day he became more than ever dull and melancholy; he took no further notice of Flavia, and only counted the hours till he should return home.

The remainder of the week was long afterwards impressed upon his memory as one of the deepest gloom and mortification; but it was illumined by one bright gleam at the end.

It was the last evening he was to stay, and he was walking in a retired walk formed by a close-clipped yew hedge, upon the other side of which there was a terrace forming another walk. As he was here sauntering up and down, he heard voices approaching, and before he was aware, these words reached him:

"You may say what you like, George, but I am sorry for him.

"He's as ill-tempered, surly, ill-mannered a cub as ever I saw in my life."

"He wasn't always so."

"Well, he's so now; and that's enough for me."

"I don't think we've been good-natured to him since the others went."

"I don't care whether we have or not; I'm not come here to spend my holidays in making the civil to lubbers like that."

"He *is* very ugly, but he used to be very kind about the strawberries; and I'm sorry I've been ungrateful, that I am."

A servant in a splendid livery, driving a pair of beautiful horses in a somewhat too showy phaëton, came to fetch Harry away. He was to join his father and mother at a sea-bathing place at no great distance from Castle Delaval. Lord George and Flavia stood together at the breakfast-room window as the handsome equipage passed by to the door, where it remained awaiting Harry. Lord George surveyed it with something very like envy.

"Oh! what a beautiful pair of horses!" said Flavia; "and what a pretty carriage! I wonder whether Harry can drive them himself."

"No, no, I'll be bound."

"You'd like to have such a pair to drive; wouldn't you, George? and how well you'd drive them!"

"Like to have! No; I shouldn't like to have anything so vulgar and fine. Why, the harness is plated all over, I think; and the carriage! did you ever see such a thing?"

"It's very pretty, I think."

"I suppose you'd like a ride in it?"

"Yes; very much. I wish mamma, or grandmamma, would have phaëtons; or your mamma, George, and then you'd drive me."

"Yes, I dare say. And now, I dare say, you're longing to drive with Harry. Oh! yes; you'd soon forsake me for him, if you saw these fine things every day," said her cousin, pettishly.

"You think I should? Very well. But I never like anybody the better for being fine; and that you ought to know, George. I don't love fine things. At least, some way, where people have all sorts of fine things I think it makes 'em disagreeable. I don't like the girls at school for it; and I am glad grandmamma does not make me fine. And if I like Harry at all—and sometimes I do like him, though you say he is such a lout—it's not because he *is*, but because he isn't fine. Nor Caroline either. They're not a bit fine. They could be if they would; for their father's as rich—as rich—as this," stretching out her arms wide. "And sometimes, George," said she, looking at him slily, "I think you would be fine if you could; and then I like them better than you."

"If you dare to say that again, I'll kill you," seizing her arm angrily and shaking it.

"Don't, George," she said. "I don't like you when you are cross."

"You ought not to provoke me beyond bearing, then. You know one unkind word from you drives me mad. I can't bear you to say such things, Flavia. You know I can't."

"Well, then," yielding and gentle as usual, "I'm sure I won't. I am so sorry when I vex you, George; but I wish I could say what comes into my head as it comes, without making you so angry."

Harry entered to bid them good-bye.

"Farewell, Miss Flavia!" he said. "Farewell, Lord George!"

He certainly did not look the least elevated by the prospect of driving off in the beautiful phaëton; but he was very glad to go, and he was more animated than usual, and looked happier.

"Farewell!" said Lord George. "That's a dandy sort of thing your father has got there."

"Is it?" said Harry. "Oh! yes; I see he's sent the phaëton. He's very good-natured. He knows I like driving it."

"Do you drive those spirited, prancing horses yourself, Harry?" said Flavia.

"To be sure I do. Why shouldn't I?"

He visibly rose in the little lady's esteem.

Lord George said nothing; but he felt all the uncomfortable feelings which envy and jealousy combined produce. He could not bear the idea of Harry not only possessing the right, but the power, to drive away before his cousin in this dashing style. He measured the effect produced upon her by that produced upon himself.

He did her very great injustice.

She was only pleased to see a trait of manliness where she had not expected it. She was still perfectly insensible to the show and parade.

However, the parting was now over. Harry ascended his father's phaëton, the servant surrendered the reins into his hands, and away he drove, in a style that astonished Lord George, who henceforward never despised him altogether, as he had ventured to do before.

He began, however, turning to Flavia, to abuse the carriage again; to declare it the vulgarest and most tawdry set-out he had ever seen; and to ridicule the way in which Harry Wilmington held the reins.

She detected something of the envy that was so clumsily concealed, and wished George would not talk in this way, and she thought she liked him a good deal less for it; but he soon recovered his good humour when the cause which excited it had passed away, and was as lively and pleasant as ever.

Did Flavia as soon forget all these different impressions?

These slight sketches will suffice to show what these young people were as children.

Some years have passed over their heads before we meet them again.

CHAPTER IV.

I felt a moral joy akin to pride,
While watching her: to see such human flowers.
T. E. READE.

THE carriage in which Harry is travelling to rejoin his father and mother is bound for the same sea-bathing place to which, in the enviable phaëton, he had driven himself some years before. When he arrived at his journey's end, it stopped before the door of a splendid lodging-house: the largest, the most handsomely furnished, and the best situated of all belonging to this sea-bathing place, where Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington were at present residing.

The sparkling sea washed the outer edge of the broad esplanade upon which the houses were situated, and the waves, with their lulling sound, were heard hoarsely breaking against it. It was a bright, beautiful, gleaming day, and the sun shone upon the green ocean; the esplanade was covered with gay groups of people walking up and down; and attending the very gayest of these groups, consisting of some very showily-dressed ladies, and flashy-looking, handsome young men, the very gayest-looking, the handsomest, and (may it not be said?) most flashy among them all, Harry descried his father.

Mr. Wilmington was a tall, finely-made man; and there was a sort of natural elegance in his face and figure, which he strove to set off to the very best advantage by every means in his power. Every means which the expenditure of money could secure he certainly could command; and therefore his dress was most rigorously arranged after the first models, and came from the hands of the most fashionable (then) tailor; and the rest of his attire, his boots, his hat, his cane—everything, in short—being from the hands of artists most eminent in their line. Nothing was ever spared in any way that could render him the complete gentleman, as he thought; and yet, in all that goes to form a just idea

of the complete gentleman, how much was sadly wanting! Perhaps he had an obscure consciousness of this himself; and that feeling it was which gave a certain effort and anxiety to his manner when in company with those moving in circles superior to his own; for which little humiliation, it must be confessed, he amply repaid himself, when in society with equals or inferiors, by the easy complacency, amounting to self-sufficiency, with which he carried himself. He was at this present moment in that happy mood and the highest spirits, attending upon some dashing young ladies now at the place, who held a nominal rank above his own. They were, nevertheless, evidently pleased and happy, dashing and fashionable as they were, to number the rich and handsome Mr. Wilmington as one of their train.

His wife was almost entirely confined to the house by the state of her health, and his time was therefore much at his own disposal; not that he was guilty—fond of show and display as he was—of unkindness or neglect: he gave her as much of his time and his company, and a great deal more of his money, than she wanted. She was, as I have said, of so different a disposition from his, that his society was in fact of little or no value to her; so that she was better pleased when he was amusing himself in the above way than if he had devoted all his time to her. But this she scrupulously concealed from her children, carefully bringing them up to love and respect the man she had once loved too well herself: a task in which as yet she had pretty well succeeded. Mr. Wilmington's good humour and ready indulgence had won the love of his children; and they were yet both of them too young to detect the absence of those qualities which would have demanded their respect.

Seeing the carriage drive up the esplanade, Mr. Wilmington was not sorry to stop, under pretence of speaking to Harry, and to display his very handsome equipage to the admiring company.

"Well, Harry, my boy, how goes it? How did you leave our good friends, and the young ladies, and all you left behind you?"

"Oh! thank you, sir; all very well. Where's my mother?"

"Up-stairs in the dining-room there, and Caroline with her."

Harry sprang from the carriage, shook hands with his father, and was soon up-stairs.

The room was darkened, the mother lay as usual upon her couch, breathing with difficulty and suffering much.

Caroline was sitting by her at work, endeavouring to amuse her with such of the little chit-chat of the place as she had been able to pick up.

"Is that you; is that my own boy?"

"Yes, dearest, dearest mother! and, oh! so glad to come home again."

"Are you, my dear fellow? Come to me; let me have a kiss from my dear boy! Draw the blind a little, Carry, that I may see how he is looking. Dear boy! so well! and yet —have you been enjoying yourself, my own?"

"I ought to have been," said her son, "and it is my own fault if I have not; but, mother, you know what a shy, dull fellow I am anywhere but at home with you. I sometimes think that your love spoils me, dear mother; your tenderness and partiality make me too sensible of the slights and indifference of others; but don't talk of it, dear mother: Caroline lectures me about these things; and when I am out of company, I am so glad to have done thinking about it, and enjoy my dear, dear home again. How well my father is looking! and what a charming house you have got! and this delicious sea! Does my father boat?"

"Do you not know?" said his mother. "Perhaps he means to surprise you. Your father has bought the 'Esmeralda,' Sir William Hereford's yacht, the largest and most beautiful vessel in the club: she lies moored at no great distance. It was very kindly done of him: he thought a sea voyage might be of use to me; but I think I would rather stay quietly where I am; however, you and Caroline will enjoy it."

"Dear mother, we shall not either of us enjoy it much without you," said both.

Harry's mother was a very thin, pale, delicate woman, with nerves of the most sickly irritability, uncertain spirits, and little, if any, physical strength; one of those imperfect and feeble constitutions which render the body, as it were, the prison instead of the instrument of the mind; a troublesome, impeding tyrant, instead of the glad and obedient minister it ought to be. It was probably from her that the young man derived that constitutional shyness, self-distrust, and timidity, which amounted almost to infirmity, and interfered so much with his happiness, and at times even with his usefulness; but from her he might in compensation

justly claim the noble inheritance of a clear and sound understanding, and a heart as free from selfishness, vanity, or folly of this nature, as ever beat in the human bosom.

Mrs. Wilmington was so completely a prisoner, so entirely confined to her drawing-room sofa, and to gentle airings in her own close carriage, that it was almost impossible for a wife and a mother to take less part than she was able to do in the superintendence of her household. The fine brown-eyed girl, so erect and spirited in look and gesture, who it was difficult to believe could be the daughter of so frail a being, had, therefore, as I have told you, received the usual routine of education at a fashionable school; here she had found herself entirely out of her element, and had made no figure in those accomplishments which form so large an object of attention in such places: however, as she held up her head remarkably well, and showed a decided taste for algebra, Greek, and geology, all of which were among the accomplishments professed to be taught at Mrs. Steelcollars', she was almost, but not quite, as great a favourite with that lady as the tall and beautiful Miss Emerson, who danced like an angel and played like Henri Herz.

The higher part of her education, however, she had acquired for herself or imbibed from her mother. Her moral and mental education had been complete. With her mother she had read and conversed, and her mind had been opened and cultivated by the side of that sick couch in a way that few governesses and no school could have accomplished. The rare abilities and noble qualities of this fine girl expanded under this culture, and she was now as remarkable for her mental accomplishments as for her extraordinary strength of apprehension, rectitude of judgment, and force of character.

The care of Harry had been a still dearer task than even this: Mrs. Wilmington perfectly doted upon her son. She loved her husband, too, dearly, in spite of the little intrinsic worth of his character: charmed with his gaiety, captivated by the extraordinary beauty of his face and figure, Mrs. Wilmington seemed to have overlooked those defects in both manner and mind which had been evident enough to some of her friends. His affectionate attentions during this long course of delicate health, which might almost be called an uninterrupted illness, had strengthened her affection. Like many fond and partial women, she never seemed to be aware of his many defects; and yet there was a something wanting, which was rather felt than confessed.

Proud as he was of his marriage with a woman of her

birth and connections, he would have been himself more in his element with a more ordinary person. They loved each other, but could not suffice to each other's happiness. He could find delight in nothing but expense and gaiety, she in nothing but quiet and domesticity. It does not appear, however, that Mr. Wilmington's profuse and extravagant habits, or his passion for display, ever excited the least uneasiness in his wife's mind. She knew nothing of business, and, like many other women, considered it a matter completely out of her sphere; indeed, rather piqued herself upon knowing nothing about it, as women are apt to do upon their ignorance of anything they esteem unfeminine or ungraceful. It was a weakness. Mrs. Wilmington was far from being faultless: she was much like the majority of us; had some fine and good qualities, and many weaknesses; had most pure and upright intentions, and yet made many mistakes.

Her complete abandonment of herself to this nervous weakness and incapacity, the manner in which she allowed herself to be conquered by the body, was probaby one. We must not judge others harshly, particularly in such cases. Few know what efforts have been made, or what was or was not in the sufferer's power, called to this war of the soul against the incapacitating infirmities of the body. But, if the truth is to be told, I am afraid Mrs. Wilmington never had attempted that fight with the persevering earnestness and energy which alone can hold out the chance of victory.

The excessive indulgence of her husband, and the life of unbounded luxury in which she lived, doubtless contributed to produce an enervating effect.

However, though her bodily habits were so languid and indolent, her mind, it is justice to say, maintained considerable activity, and her children profited largely by that constant communication with her which habits domestic as hers allowed.

One quality she possessed in the highest degree: she was a woman of the nicest feelings of honour. She had been brought up among people whose sentiments, quite chivalric in this respect, were habitual. The only thing that she distrusted, that she did not quite like in her husband, was a something, a certain want of delicacy in regard to money matters, which troubled her, particularly if he ever happened to allude to his speculations and plans for getting money before her, which, indeed, was very rarely the case.

The advantage taken amid rising and falling markets, of intelligence withheld from others, and by which speculations were guided, through which others must inevitably become

losers, hurt and perplexed her; and she would, in her softest voice, and with her gentlest manner, hint her doubts and her scruples. But her gay partner would silence her with a kiss, bidding her hold her pretty tongue, and not meddle with matters it was impossible she should comprehend.

"Let *me* get the money, and you only busy yourself with spending it. Diamond cut diamond is the soul of commercial transactions, and what every one engaged in them thoroughly understands. What, my sweet casuist! you would not have me go into the market crippled by a thousand imaginary scruples, which never enter the heads of men I have to meet there? I should soon be in the Gazette if I did. Depend upon it, my dear, every man upon 'Change knows very well how to take care of himself; and it's much better as it is than if everybody were taking care of everybody. How would business get on in that case, do you think? Such ideas are only fit for your noodle of a Harry; he's quite up to them, which you and he may thank heaven I am not. But as his fortune will be made for him, he will be able to indulge the luxury of such nice notions, which poor devils like myself unfortunately are not."

Thus would he run on. And this noodle of a Harry, this boy whom the father so little understood, and so greatly undervalued, oh! how dear was the delicate-minded, high-souled, sensitive being to the mother's heart! Far, far the dearer because she looked upon him in that sacred light of one unfortunate, which exercises such a holy influence over the mother's feelings.

She would turn to this idol of her soul, this ideal image of the excellent and the pure, which her son's character, as she fondly painted it to herself, presented; and she would strive to add one touch, one line more to this fair portraiture of moral beauty.

And thus Harry had grown up.

He was not sent to a great school: he neither received the advantages nor was exposed to the disadvantages of that system of education. In general, I think I have observed that those more privately educated receive a higher culture, and have most of their faculties more fully and completely developed than those who have in public schools been called upon to make their own way, and take their chance in the world; but then, one perhaps the most important among all the powers, is often found to be weak; namely, that readiness, aptness, cleverness, which may be named the faculty of using the rest.

Harry, of all boys in the world, was the fittest to be

trusted to the chances of a public education; for, in spite of his sensitiveness and timidity, few boys possessed a higher moral sense, or more admirable moral courage; and the shyness and unhandiness, if I may say so, which proved to him so great an obstruction, would thus, there is little doubt, have been corrected.

It was not his father's fault that he was not sent to Eton or Harrow. Not that Mr. Wilmington had any very refined views as to causes and effects in education: he looked no further than to those places being fashionable, and where his son would meet with good company, and might form useful and modish acquaintance. Upon this account he advocated the plan; but the mother's fears were not to be overcome.

She had heard of the barbarities of fagging, which at that period indeed were sometimes very great; of all sorts of dreadful accidents, which, lumped together, instead of taken upon the average of numbers, are undoubtedly appalling for a mother to think of. These things were sufficient to shake her sensitive nerves; but she had a better reason: she had heard of the vices and the follies too often practised where numbers of boys are thus brought together, and she was terrified at this beyond measure. To expose her innocent boy to such contamination was an idea too dreadful. She forgot how many good boys would be found in a large community; and that a boy of good disposition and well brought up at home could and would choose his associates from among them, and she did not rightly estimate Harry's disposition. She feared he would prove facile, because he was gentle and obliging; and a moral coward, because he was a social one. Her heart shrunk from exposing her treasure to these fiery trials. And what mother's heart but must tremble and shudder when first she sends the sweet, innocent being from the shelter of her anxious care, to peril the purity of his heart and the health of his frame, and expose his virtue and happiness to all these rude chances?

Who can wonder? and what shall we say?

Except that happily the spirit of improvement has reached these ancient seats of education; that the evils are vastly diminished, and the good to be derived from them vastly enhanced; and that the man seems upon the whole to profit by this species of early discipline of the boy, among the struggles and temptations to which he is exposed with his fellows. Still, enough remains uncorrected to terrify any conscientious mother.

So Harry was sent to a very select private school, where

few were admitted; where Lord George went as a young boy upon his passage to Eton, but where Selwyn and himself completed their school education.

"We shall not either of us enjoy it much without you," said both.

"But I hope you will, my dears, or your father will be grievously disappointed; for, to enjoy it myself is really impossible. I could not bear the sea-sickness even for an hour, still less all the little fatigues to which the day will give rise. But you two must go, and be as happy as you possibly can; for, next to pleasing me," she added, with a tender smile, "the greatest satisfaction your dear father has upon earth is to give pleasure to his children."

Perhaps that was not altogether the fact; but she thought so; and, as far as she was concerned, that was as well.

"I shall like the yachting well enough," said Harry. "I think I should like it very much if Carry, and I, and Selwyn, and my father had it to ourselves; but there will be a crowd of people on board that I neither know nor care for; and in that case I would rather be anywhere else in the world. I detest fine people."

"Ah, Harry!" said the gentle mother, "how I dislike to hear you talk in that manner! Will you never be ashamed of being such a young savage? Shall I never reconcile my own boy to civilised society? Do you know, dear, the more you dislike it the more I think you ought to be forced into it? Don't you, dear Carry?"

"That I do, mamma. I can't think what it is that Harry abominates so much in society. I am sure I find almost everybody tolerable, and most people pleasant. Though I don't suppose one must expect many people to be particularly amiable, wise, or charming, like you, dear mamma."

"That's it," said Harry. "I like nobody's company but yours and Carry's. That quite contents me; and if it contents you, I do not see that I am bound to content other people."

"But what if it does not quite content me? And what if it does not quite content your father?"

"Oh! but, mother, be reasonable. Let it content you, and as for my father, I don't think he cares much about it. And, indeed, I do him so little credit, I am so loutish and so stupid, that he would be better pleased, I believe, never to

have me with him in company. He likes Carry. Carry is handsome, and clever, and gay, and holds up her head, and walks firm: I am ugly, and slow, and dull, and hold my head down, and walk with my knees knocking together. What can my father do but be ashamed of such a son? and what better than leave him to keep company with a dear, dear mother, who loves him in spite of all his wantings?"

"Ah, Harry! But why will you be stupid, and dull, and hold down your head, and hesitate in your walk?" said Caroline. "If you would take mamma's advice, and go out a good deal more, and use yourself to company, you would lose all those disagreeable feelings; and then my father would be as proud of you as he is fond of you; for he loves you exceedingly in his heart. That I am certain of."

"Then he is a most generous and affectionate father," said Harry with feeling, "to love one who must be a constant source of mortification to a man so brilliant as himself. But you are right, Caroline: never son met with more indulgence from a father in every way than I have done from mine."

"If you thought it would please him, dear mother," turning to her, "that I should go upon this yachting party, I am sure that would make it quite a different thing. I ought to say the same of pleasing you, only that I know it is only with reference to my own good that you care about it; but if it were possible that it would please him, I would go there or anywhere you liked."

"I am sure it would please your father very much, my dear."

Did she really think this, or was she, in her weakness, indulging in one of those deviations from the exact truth, for the sake of apparent good, which is the fatal temptation of the feeble?

She had not the strength to assume the mother's authority. She felt glad to get off so easily; to take advantage of her son's grateful desire to gratify his father, and thus engage him to do what she thought advantageous for himself.

Mischief most often arises from these little deviations from the exact truth, which many people think so harmless. But I don't know that any great harm ensued here, except that it added to the delusion with regard to his father's real character, which the mother would, with her ideas, have thought it an advantage to maintain.

"Then I am sure I ought to go," said the son; "and I will go. But who is to be of this yacht party?"

"Oh! some very fine people," said Caroline, laughing;

"but mamma and I would not tell you till you were a good boy, and had promised to go, for fear you should take fright. There will be one that you love, some that you hate; but you must get over that nonsense, dear Harry, for Lord George is a good-natured fellow; and then there will be the dear, good duchess, who has promised to come and chaperon Flavia, because her mother is at Paris."

Harry made no reply to this, but turned away to the window, and looked out upon the esplanade.

It was now crowded with company; but he could easily distinguish the fine tall figure of his father, busily engaged in conversation with the showy party among which he had first seen him. His eye followed him for some time with a strange mingled feeling of admiration and dissatisfaction. It was impossible for him not to admire that brilliant appearance; and, perhaps, as he glanced at his own unambitious figure, a something almost like envy might mingle with his admiration; for who that has ever loved, and distrusted his own personal attractions, but has felt a touch of that bitter feeling when placed in strong contrast with another, and that other so singularly endowed in this respect as was the handsome Mr. Wilmington?

But it was not transient feelings such as these which lay at the root of that obscure sentiment of distrust and dissatisfaction, as I have called it, which began now to mingle, almost imperceptibly to himself, with Harry's feelings as regarded his father. In the first place, his taste, which was so pure and delicate, revolted instinctively against everything that in the least degree bordered upon pretension, affectation, or display. He carried this delicacy to excess, as affected himself; almost to a pernicious excess. He was ready, in his abhorrence of varnish, to neglect polish: a mistake into which men of his temper are apt to fall, and from the ill effects of which he was, I think, preserved only by the extreme gentleness and unselfishness of his temper.

One so gentle could not be rough; one so unselfish could not be rude. He might be awkward though, and that he was; but to a person of fine taste his little awkwardnesses would have been redeemed by the truth and simplicity which pervaded every action; would have been a thousand times more pleasing than the somewhat flashy and overdone manners of the father. It was this flashiness, this love of display, and, above all, this manner of the *ci-devant jeune homme*, which Harry could not endure. It irritated him beyond measure. Yet such was the simplicity of his filial piety, that he resisted such feelings whenever they arose, and tried to persuade him

self that the fault lay in his own fastidiousness and singularity. But there were other and still more serious grounds of uneasiness and suspicion, which began to take rise as the young man advanced in age, and became an observer, a quiet but acute observer, of what was passing around him. This was his father's excessive passion for display and habits of unbounded expense. It was not as yet so much as a matter of prudence, for he had not the slightest reason to doubt his father's means of supplying this lavish expenditure, as a matter of feeling and principle.

In this respect, almost an exception to young men of the present day, Harry positively disliked extravagance and luxury, even when justified by the most abundant fortune. The splendid apartments, the gilding, the painting, the plate, the glass, the velvets, the grand feasts—nay, even the highly-ornamented gardens of his father's magnificent house at Roehampton—were oppressive and distasteful to him. His own apartment, in the midst of so much splendour, was fitted up with an almost Spartan simplicity. He left the berceaux, the parterres, the beautiful plantations of his father's gardens, and loved to wander amidst the trees and shades of Wimbledon Park, to listen to the lowing cattle, the nightingales singing in the thickets, and watch the sun rise upon the dewy grass, whilst the breath of morning played upon his pure young brow.

In dress it was the same: his father's splendid waistcoats, inestimable diamond ring, and studs that might have been fitted for an emperor, were to him positive sources of pain. In vain his fond mother, in vain his lavish and indulgent father, bought choice ornaments for their son; he received them with feelings of a tender gratitude, which glistened in his dark eye and coloured his pale cheek; but not even the affection such little cares inspired could induce him to wear such ornaments.

When reproached tenderly with this by his mother, he would smile gently, and say that his person was too plain to bear lighting up; that the less observation he excited the better; he should make his way; that it was his father's part to shine and his to be obscure, and the more obscure the better for him.

Caroline would stand by whilst these little discussions were going one, with her large dark eyes fixed upon her brother, and her expressive and finely-moulded countenance filled with looks of love and approbation, an intensity of sisterly admiration and affection; but she never said anything: there was a sympathy between these two so strong that words

were unnecessary. Caroline adhered to the same simplicity of taste and habits as her brother; the fine young creature was always dressed with the utmost simplicity; but then, everything she wore became her so well that neither father, mother, nor friend could wish for an alteration.

Harry, as he now stood at the window watching the scene before him, became aware of the beautiful yacht which was just approaching the land, all sails set, streamers flying, and bearing herself gracefully before the wind. He could not but admire the lovely vessel, which was of considerable size for a pleasure yacht, as there she came forward over the sparkling waves, like a beautiful sea-bird, with her snowy wings expanded for flight.

"Here comes the 'Esmeralda!'" he said, turning to his sister. "Dear mother, do not you think it would do you good to take one sail? She is a charming craft indeed. Impossible," added he, smiling, "for any one to be sea-sick in her; and the day is delightful."

"No, my dear," said the poor captive of infirm nerves; "I am not equal to it; but I hear your father's impatient step upon the stairs. Carry, are you ready?"

"In one moment, mamma."

Mr. Wilmington entered the room rather in a bustle and a flurry.

"Harry, boy, are you ready? Is that the best sea-cloak you have, lad? Really, if that is your costume, young man, I shall be obliged to send you to the steerage."

He had a splendid boat-cloak hanging upon his arm; very much too ornate, as Harry thought, for salt-water splashing.

"Here, Reynolds, fetch Master Harry that cloak of mine with the sable collar, which lies in my dressing-room."

"Thank you, sir," said his son; "your vestments, I am sorry to say, are miles too long for me. I won't trouble you, Reynolds; this will do very well."

"Is all safely stored? The Perigord pies, the ortolans, the truffles? The duchess will like *them:* those grapes I sent for from London; and, above all, the materials for the Burgundy cup ——"

In a fussy, hurried manner—

"Yes, sir; yes, Mr. Wilmington; everything," said the accomplished Reynolds; "all has been on board since eight o'clock. I thought it as well to add a a few bottles of Chablis ——"

"Very well. Is there nothing else you can think of, Reynolds?"

"Nothing, Mr. Wilmington; positively nothing."

"Oh! here comes my wood-nymph—my, my young Diana! my Caroline! Why, Carry, you really surpass yourself. I never saw such a girl. Well, that black cloak and straw hat are infinitely becoming, I must own; but there are such dresses going on board! Mrs. Emerson, for instance: her bonnet is just from Paris, and her veil new from Brussels, arrived yesterday; and such a dress! I am afraid, child, you will look very meanly among them all; but you are so handsome, there's no saying. Yet, I think Mrs. Wilmington's lace veil; the one I gave her the other day ——"

"Oh! positively no, papa; I'm at home in your yacht; pray let me be as I am. I could not have a fine veil, and that is such a beauty, flying about my head, flapping like a sea-bird. Oh! let us begone. It is a most charming morning."

CHAPTER V.

Like a thing of spirit-birth,
Floating on our surface-earth!—T. E. Reade.

It was as she said.

The heavens, one pure blue expanse, above; the sea, clear and bright as emerald beneath, heaving in gentle waves under the influence of a light refreshing breeze, which sparkled as they rose and fell in the gleaming sun, and broke in low murmurs upon the sand.

Several small boats were dancing upon the water near a few rocks, which, covered with black tufts of sea-tangle, their little caves fringed with scarlet and yellow sea anemones, showed their jagged tops, here and there, along the shore.

A very gay, not to say very smart, party was gathered together upon the beach, waiting for the duchess, who had not yet arrived. There were bonnets; pink, white, and blue; flowers and veils, delicate shawls, and elegant cloaks, and parasols of the softest colours in abundance; and though it might be very true that such delicate things and such gay colours were rather out of place in a yachting party, I am ashamed to say for myself that, as I stood by watching the gay throng, though I thought Caroline looked charming in her simple attire, I could not regret that the crowd were not of her taste. It looked so bright, so pretty as it was, and set off my favourite to the more advantage.

Mr. Wilmington, towering among the rest with his fine

figure and showy dress, was to be seen here, there, and everywhere, as if he multiplied himself in his anxiety to do the honours of his party.

I thought there was something almost amiable in this endeavour to please, and to have everybody pleased; and yet it was impossible not to detect a sort of latent vulgarity of soul that transpired through all the exterior graces of this singularly fine and handsome man. I turned away from him, and looked to his son.

Harry was standing near the boats; not inactive, though quiet. He was attending to the accommodation prepared for those who were to go in the smaller boats; not in the one so ostentatiously arrayed to receive the duchess and her party, where places could not be for every one.

He said little, and certainly had not the slightest appearance of fuss or hurry, but he gave his orders briefly and distinctly, and I observed that they were promptly attended to.

Presently the sound of carriage wheels was heard; and I saw him hastily lift up his head, look round, change colour, and then turn to the water again.

The carriage was a coach; and I could see contained two ladies upon the back seat, a gentleman, extended at full length, occupying the front one.

The lady in the farther corner was very old, and all muffled up in silks and fine laces, with a close white satin bonnet, just as I love to see old age. I love to see this modesty of old age; this wrapping up of the frail relics of what once was grace and beauty; those gray hairs braided over the brow; this calm submission to the inevitable doom which condemns the fairest to wrinkles and decay. It is very beautiful, holy, and touching. More still do I love to contemplate the calm, gentle composure, the reverence and the wisdom of many years, the tranquil softness of past sorrows, the print of a life whose every accident has left some fresh touch of excellence behind it.

And such was the duchess. I wish I could by words do justice to the impression she made upon me.

But what words shall I use to paint the fair young creature at her side?

A small, beautiful fairy she was. It is a hackneyed expression, but she literally seemed a fairy. Her figure was the most perfectly and exquisitely proportioned that it was possible for poet to have imagined or sculptor called into existence. The excessive beauty of form, I suppose it was, that gave such a charm to even the slightest motion. She

was the picture of health; and the elastic footstep seemed almost too light to touch the earth. Then the face, which I now saw looking impatiently out of the window! What a sweet, radiant, blooming face it was! Such a lovely, gay, rosy colour, yet so delicately rosy! Eyes so bright, so sweet, so inexpressibly charming! A smile that it was like paradise to gaze upon; such an ineffable air of kindness, truth, affectionateness, goodness. You will think I am in danger of doting, like the poor fellow who stood, his eyes fixed upon the water, his heart fluttering with varying feelings. But I am an old man; it is my privilege now to admire, to dote, to adore, without being troubled with those hopes and fears of which in my youth I had my share as well as other young people. I could gaze without danger upon this sweet being, as one of the handsomest young fellows I ever saw, springing up from his recumbent posture as the coach stopped, jumped from the carriage, and handed her out: having done so, he was going to put her arm under his, and walk away towards the boats; but she stopped, and saying, "Grandmamma!" turned to the carriage, and most carefully assisted the old lady to descend; which she did with some difficulty, aided by her servants, and now, indeed, by Lord George, for he it was.

Having performed this duty, he again wanted to appropriate Flavia to himself, and leave the duchess to the care of her people, but the young creature did not seem to understand it in that way at all; I saw her shake him off and give her little arm to her grandmother, looking up at him as she did so with a pretty, wicked smile, when she saw he looked cross and disappointed, as much as to say, "No, no, don't think of such a thing; grandmamma before all." But they were instantly joined by Mr. Wilmington, who, hurrying to the duchess, offered his arm with the most officious politeness. Lord George then made another effort to appropriate Flavia, but she seemed to prefer being left at liberty, and sprang forward to meet Caroline, who was approaching, and with whom a joyful greeting was exchanged. Harry now came up, and in a shy and awkward manner, which gave a great coldness to his air, responded to the young lady's friendly greeting.

I saw all this little scene as I there stood; saw Lord George glance at Harry, measure him from head to foot with a sarcastic air of satisfaction; Harry glance at Lord George, and instantly turn away and busy himself with the boats. Flavia mean time took Caroline's arm, gaily laughing and talking, and tripped down to the water.

The boat prepared for the royal party, I was going to say, the duchess was almost respected as such in this circle, was soon filled; she was placed in the comfortable seat prepared for her; Lord George, and Flavia, and Caroline, of course, with her. Mr. Wilmington, with a good deal of fuss, succeeded in getting most of those on board whom he had selected for this honour, among whom presently appeared the elegant Mrs. Emerson and her beautiful daughter, Lizzy. Harry was not of the happy few; his father left him to take care of the remaining and less distinguished members of the party: a subordinate place for which he deemed his ungraceful son exactly fitted; and so, indeed, he was, if the kindest attention to the comforts of every one, especially of the more obscure, could fit a man for such an office.

There was some little delay in the starting, during which Lord George, seated between Flavia and the duchess, and in the highest possible spirits, was full of fun, really good fun, and did his best to amuse her. She laughed, looking over the side of the boat towards the land, where the remnant of the party was embarking under Harry's directions, among whom there were certainly some rather droll figures, who afforded subject matter sufficient for the wicked wit. His wit was upon the whole inoffensive and fair enough; but sometimes it was seasoned with a little more ill-nature than some persons would have approved, and always tinctured with a certain arrogance when he found himself in a society of the present description.

Caroline was sometimes amused, often inclined to be angry. Flavia laughed. How can she laugh so at everything Lord George says, foolish or not? thought Caroline. She did not perceive that Flavia was at that moment laughing by rote, as one might say, laughing without even hearing what Lord George said, from mere absence of mind: she was watching the other boats.

She saw an elderly lady, dressed in a widow's dress, and a very plain, delicate-looking girl, standing humbly on one side, whilst every one else was pressing forward and getting themselves good places.

Harry was standing there, helping people into the boat, and she watched these two pushed and shuffled aside by the bustling throng. Then she saw him speak to one of the sailors and jump over the side of the boat, leaving the man to take his place, go up to this poorly-dressed widow and this plain, feeble-looking girl, exchange some kind greetings, very cordial indeed they appeared to her, and then, offering an arm to each, attend them to the water's edge; he then

in making this beautiful young girl believe in the sudden admiration with which she had inspired him; and the way in which she laid herself open to this impertinent flattery was a very contemptible but a very ordinary picture of what happens between fashionable young lordlings and very handsome young ladies, not aristocratic or in society; that is when beauty atones for the moment for their other shortcomings, and makes them objects deserving of this insolent sort of homage, of the full impertinence of which it would be very well for them to be thoroughly aware.

Flavia coloured and looked vexed, offended, and peevish, all which doubled Lord George's enjoyment. Every now and then he cast a glance at her from his handsome saucy eyes, as much as to say, "Now, really, is it possible? Can you for a moment?" And, gratified to the extreme with what he took for jealousy, he was in higher and more exuberant spirits than ever.

When the time for the collation came, he started up to look for Caroline, and offered his other arm to Miss Emerson, with a glance of high enjoyment to see how Flavia would like it.

Her pretty lip had a curious expression. There was a something contemptuous, which he would not quite have liked had it not evidently been the result of ill humour.

But Miss Emerson fluttered, and chatted, and looked really splendidly handsome thus animated, and he turned away and found Caroline, and took her down, and Flavia was left standing there. Mr. Wilmington had attended the duchess and provided for Mrs. Emerson, concluding, of course, that Flavia would be the charge of Lord George.

She looked round. Harry was at a little distance, about to offer his arm, as it would seem, to the poor widow; but he glanced that way, saw Miss L—— standing there alone, turned to Selwyn, who stood by, begged him to take care of Mrs. Freeman, and was at her side, and with his arm offered in a moment. He changed colour several times as she took it, and stammered and looked very shy, but oh, so happy! It was really beautiful to see what expression could do for that countenance. They went down together, she talking to him, but in a low, subdued voice, and not with her usual gaiety; and I turned to look at Selwyn.

He was a very interesting-looking person, very gentlemanlike in his appearance, being pale, but with a particularly refined cast of countenance, evidently suffering from ill-health. He was now, as I understood, at Oxford. His manners were, I thought, particularly pleasing, as he as-

helped them in, placed them in a convenient place, to do which he was forced to derange some very gaily-dressed young men, who looked contemptuously at the intruders; then he wrapped the young lady in his own boat-cloak, and, giving the signal, the boats started, and he placed himself by her side.

"Who's that?" said Flavia to Caroline.

"Who? where? whom do you mean?"

"Do you see the boat your brother is in? the last of them? Oh! you can't see it now; never mind."

And now they are all upon the deck, where a white awning is stretched to shelter them from the sun, gaily decked out and perfumed with exotic flowers, or flowers forced to blow before their time. Moss-roses and lilacs in abundance, and beautiful heaths and lilies, &c. &c. If the vessel should roll much it is to be feared these beautiful things will tumble about; but it will not roll upon such a day.

The cabin of this yacht is the most richly ornamented thing you ever saw. Panelled with glass and china, on which last bouquets of flowers are painted, and no gilding spared, you may be sure of that. And there is gilding upon the head, as if it were a barge for my Lord Mayor; and upon the railings, here, and there, and everywhere. Too much of it for my taste, even though I am rather fond of the bright and fine. Sadly too much for Harry's, which wanted the vulgarity of mine.

However, it looks excessively gay with all those pretty women upon it; and there are, as usual upon such occasions, a few happy and gratified, and a great many neither gratified nor happy.

Mrs. Emerson is among the first. Mr. Wilmington has introduced this very fine lady to the good old duchess, and she is sitting by her, and has the supreme felicity and privilege of entertaining her; and her daughter, the beautiful Lizzy, is advanced to honours also, and sits by Flavia, whom she has known at school, and has, moreover, the delight and distinction of being often addressed by Lord George himself. Indeed, he seems to take great notice of her, talks to her, and directs his best jokes to her, and at last, oh triumph! actually gets up from his place between Flavia and the duchess, and takes possession of the one just vacated by Caroline at Miss Emerson's side.

And how he flirted when there, and the pleasure he took

sisted this lady and her daughter to the cabin. I think I was, upon the whole, more struck with him than with any one; but he was so extremely silent, and seemed so languid and unwell, that he took scarcely any part in the business of the day.

"And I wanted to ask you who she was that you took such especial care of, Mr. Henry Wilmington, as the company were getting into the boats?"

"Who? I don't remember."

"Don't you? but I watched all your proceedings, and I remember quite well. A very pale girl, looking too sickly for this sort of affair; I wonder what she came for. She cannot enjoy such scenes; impossible; except, indeed ——"

"Oh! I know who you mean now. Mrs. Freeman and her daughter. Poor thing! enjoy them! No, I am afraid she cannot; but she comes to please her mother, I believe. It is her mother's idea that her deep melancholy may be in some little degree dissipated by such pictures of life, for those things are but as pictures to her, and that the fine air and sailing upon such a day may do good. I doubt it myself."

"And is there nothing else here?" said Flavia, a little sarcastically.

My pretty Flavia, do not be so mean. Do not grudge a cast-off lover to the poor girl. It is the poor man's lamb to her. I am afraid we shall hate you if you do that.

"Is there nothing here to divert her melancholy but pictures of life and fresh air? Nothing, Harry, nothing?" looking with meaning. "Take care of what you are about."

"Of what I am about?" said he with simplicity, not having the slightest idea of her meaning, so far were such thoughts from him. "What can you mean? Poor thing!"

"Ah, Mr. Wilmington! What is the cause of all this melancholy on her part, I wonder?"

"Don't you know? How should you? That poor woman, her mother, was wife to the captain of one of my father's ships. He was a plain, rough fellow, as such men mostly are, but a worthy man and excellent commander of a vessel. The poor girl's betrothed sailed with him as mate. It was to be his last voyage, poor lad! and then he was to come home and marry her. They were bound for Newfoundland. It's a long, a dismal, but a heroic story. The ship struck upon a sunken rock; the boats were got out; all those on board were saved, but these two insisted upon being the last to quit the vessel. This good fellow and this brave boy! He was seconding his captain in his attempt to save some pro-

visions, and to rescue them all. They were, with three more sailors, still upon the vessel when she gave way, went to pieces, and they all perished.

"The poor man had a large venture on board; the poor lad had his all engaged in that venture. They left these two women beggars and friendless, for they had not a relation in the world. The widow bore up and will fight it out, the girl will go at last. She is a commonplace, good-hearted woman, just a proper wife for her rough, honest husband; but the two young ones were different. I don't know how it was, but there was a delicacy and sensibility about her that one would wonder how she came by; and he was a fine noble-hearted fellow, poor lad!"

Flavia's glistening eyes were bent upon Harry's face, as with an expression and tone of the deepest feeling he told this little story. He was not, and could not be, in the least aware of the interest these moments of deep feeling gave to his countenance. She gazed, was silent, dropped her eyes, mused, and stood there thoughtfully.

"Will you not sit down? Will you not take something?"

She started as from a brief trance.

"No, I thank you. Tell me what is become of them?"

"Why, they are here. My father is a generous man; he would not leave the widow and daughter of a meritorious servant exposed to pecuniary distress; he allows them a pension, but sickness is expensive; such allowances necessarily cannot be very large. They are not rich, and among all these fine people look poor; poorer in fact than they are. I almost wonder the mother likes to come into such scenes; but so it is."

"And when in such scenes they are exposed to be neglected and shuffled about: that is alway sthe case. 'Why, let the stricken deer go weep,' is the maxim of the world. What business have they to parade their crape and their pale faces amongst us? think they. I saw it as I sat watching what was going on."

"Yes, I suppose it must be so. People don't come to these sort of places to exercise the charities of life. It can hardly be expected, and this is why I wish the poor woman would stay away, for she is one of those who feel these things very much. This sort of commonplace minds are peculiarly susceptible of such little mortifications; over the poor girl they glide as a rain-drop over the polished surface of a leaf. Grief elevates and ennobles the mind."

"I don't think there are many minds capable of grief," was Flavia's answer. "People seem to me to hate grief,

and to fly from serious thought as the bane of existence. I don't like that; it is so dull to be always laughing."

"Can *you* think so?"

"You will never believe it, but I *do*. Perhaps because I have so much of the one and *none* of the other: I scarcely know what sorrow is."

"And long may that ignorance be yours!" he muttered. Then he looked at her sweet face as it was pensively bent towards the ground; and then it was suddenly turned up to him, and she said—

"Would that girl dislike to be acquainted with me? Make me acquainted with sorrow."

He hesitated.

"Would she dislike it?" said Flavia, a little surprised, for she had been too much flattered not to believe that the honour of an introduction to her must be gratifying to any one.

"You would not understand each other. You belong to distant spheres. If you were to talk to her you would find all your poetic imagination vanish. Her mind and her heart are as I have described them, but you would be disgusted with her *h*'s. A person may feel most tenderly and most generously, yet put an *h* in the wrong place, who could retain her interest in them on finding it so?"

"Ah, Mr. Wilmington! can you be more sarcastic than Lord George? That speech is not like you."

"Why not? Is he alone to be privileged to see things as they are?"

"Do you think everybody would be? Do you think," with a little hesitation, "I would be guilty of such injustice and hard-heartedness?" and she looked up at him again with those sweet, kind, ingenuous eyes.

He smiled upon her tenderly and softly, and said—

"It would be difficult to believe it. Yes, I dare say I am unjust: one ought not to attribute one's own weaknesses to others; the effect of fine manners, what I call really fine manners, such as people of your class, such as the duchess, for instance, possesses, is very great, much too great, I fear, upon me. It is the supreme charm, the first of beauties and graces in my eyes, deficient as I feel myself to be in such graces; I am astonished at my own susceptibility upon this matter; I am apt to fancy that what offends my taste, who have so little right to be thus offended, must doubly displease the taste of those habituated to a finer polish in things. Then I feel a sympathy, at the same time, with those who do not possess these advantages; a selfish sympathy, I fear.

I cannot bear to see intrinsic worth rendered repulsive, and perhaps ridiculous, by some trifling defect in mere external and conventional matters. I feel a reserve, a modesty, a pride for my friends, which, after all," said he, checking himself in this long speech, and smiling, "I am sure my good Mrs. Freeman, for one, would not feel for herself; for to be introduced to the grand-daughter of a duchess would form an era in her life. She would never enter into such refinements, and as for the poor girl, I told you life is become but a dream to her; yet it might afford a fleeting pleasure to be made acquainted with—one so gentle, delicate, and kind," he meant to say, but he stammered and hesitated, and did not venture to say it.

She loved to hear him talk in this way. There was something in his manner of thinking and feeling that she liked very much. Though herself so merry and apparently volatile, she was very fond of what she called conversation: serious talk upon serious subjects. She had an odd taste; she really liked it better than the brilliant nonsense which is the charm of mixed society to most people.

"But you have had nothing; how stupid I am?" said he, recollecting himself. "An ice? some fruit?"

"An ice, if you please."

As she stood with it in her hand she began again—

"So you will not introduce me to that poor girl? You will not make me acquainted with sorrow."

"God forbid!" said he, with a something she thought charmingly tender in his look and voice; then again checking himself—"I have changed my mind; I will do you *that honour*."

And she still hanging upon his arm, he approached the little side-table at which the widow and her daughter were sitting, and saying, "Mrs. Freeman, Miss L——, (you have heard of Miss L——), begs to have the pleasure of being introduced to you and Miss Freeman," made them acquainted, and Flavia, taking a place between the two ladies, began to talk to them.

He stood by watching her, and listening, and I watched him. I thought I never saw so much tender admiration expressed by a countenance before. He seemed lost in a not unpleasing train of thought; but his father's voice was heard calling for him, and he started and moved hastily away.

He left Flavia with the talkative Mrs. Freeman, who, as people of her stamp often do, began very soon to speak of her own affairs, whilst the daughter, melancholy and depressed, said little or nothing. The good woman enlarged upon that on which alone she could discourse with much interest, herself and her daughter, and their prospects and concerns. Flavia encouraged this ready openness of communication. She wanted to make herself acquainted with the feelings and tempers of those who had gone through such unexampled suffering. She thought, in spite of all Harry had said, that there must necessarily be something approaching to the great; something deeply interesting about those who had gone through so much; but, in this instance, as in many others of the kind, there was not. There was nothing to excite admiration of any sort, there was nothing to raise the imagination in any way. The afflictions, the misfortunes had been great, singular, deeply affecting; the story was simple, grand, beautiful: the woman was commonplace.

Young people should be made well aware of this. They should learn to pity, to love, to be interested, in those who in themselves are neither very loveable, nor at all interesting, if they intend to play the kind, the Christian part.

As Flavia talked, she felt the justice of what Harry had said; she found it very difficult to tolerate the "orses" and the "*h*onour" she was doing her, but she recollected his remarks, with the resolve to overcome her fastidious feelings, and she talked on kindly and pleasantly. As to the good Mrs. Freeman, she felt very happy thus to be noticed by so fine a young lady, and chatted on more confidentially than ever. And Harry figured in her history: and Flavia heard, how it was Harry who had urged her claims for assistance upon his father; how Mr. Wilmington, who was good-natured, but thoughtless, was apt to forget things of this nature, regarding others as well as herself; how Harry *never* forgot them. How much good in secret he did; how moderate were his own expenses, how simple his habits, how generous his deeds. How high his reputation stood for wise and scrupulous honour in business; how highly his abilities were rated by those who knew him well; how kind he had been to her, in so many ways, besides the great essential service he had rendered her by obtaining this pension.

So talked the widow, and Flavia sat there and listened; till at last Lord George came to fetch her away, wondering where she had hid herself all this time. He made himself very merry with the company in which he found her upon such an occasion, and wished her to come upon deck and

dance with him, and shake off all the cobwebs that had been gathering round her in that corner.

The music was sounding gaily upon the deck; but to her someway it seemed discordant: discordant as she had never heard it before. She, however, consented to dance; but soon felt tired, and bade him let her sit down, and go and dance with some one else. And so he did, and she sat upon a bench by the railing, and looked down upon the beautiful shining glassy waves, and over the fine expansive prospect, and up to the blue heavens, and the beaming sun; and there were thoughts that seemed more in harmony with those things she loved so deeply, than those of Lord George, the gay band, or the polkas they were playing.

CHAPTER VI.

I had a vision of reality;
Such as doth grow upon the eyes of Mind
Intently fixed upon the past—the past,
The prophet of the future: shadowing
From deeds and thoughts of those who suffered here,
Lessons, and prescience of things to come.
T. E. Reade.—*Revelations of Life.*

This day was an eventful day to more than one present at this little fête.

Such days, vain and unprofitable as they may seem to the moralist and the philosopher, are those which often decide many a young creature's destiny. Unfortunate in this, the young girls, under our present system, may unquestionably be considered; that what is so seriously, so deeply, so really, so infinitely, we may almost add, eternally, important to their happiness, should apparently depend upon the most trifling accidents of society—the being present or absent from such a party—nay, the being engaged or disengaged from such a dance. Men, in this object of marriage, appear to suffer themselves to be the sport of such insignificant circumstances. Few of them have the determination to make a choice, or the perseverance to adhere to that choice, and follow it up through the little difficulties and obstructions of social life. Most often they suffer themselves to be literally guided by Fate, and to accept with a sort of passive indifference the lot she puts into their hand. But, independently of this, there

can be no doubt that apparently accidental circumstances exercise a very great effect upon the feelings themselves; and the birth of the most powerful sentiment which animates the human heart may be traced to some fortuitous moment whose influence colours the whole of the rest of life. The accident of Lord George choosing to flirt with that handsome and silly, and in his opinion, vulgar Miss Emerson, for whom he did not care one sixpence, left Flavia at liberty to receive impressions which he found it difficult afterwards to efface.

She had kept up a sort of acquaintance with Harry Wilmington, it is true, by occasionally meeting him when she paid a visit to her friend Caroline, but he was so shy and distant, said so little in the drawing-room when he did come in, appeared to so little advantage in his own family, and before his father especially, that the interest she had taken in him as a boy had mostly died away, and she had thought little of him or about him. But this day the beauty of the scene, a species of beauty which always excited in Flavia a certain feeling of exaltation—a sort of moral longing after the pure and excellent in the moral world, of which the blue expanse above, the clear crystal of the wave beneath, and all the glories of external nature, are but a type—had raised the tone of her thoughts, and set her, as they often did, longing.

She loved, she liked, she admired Lord George; she thought she loved him very much, yet in these higher moments she felt dissatisfied with him. There was a seriousness, an earnestness, a desire to penetrate behind this bright veil of external things which surrounded her, and reach to the truth of life, its purposes, and its end, which was very strong with her; and of which he could not form the slightest comprehension.

They were separated, as the labourers upon that Eastern tower were separated, by the impossibility of understanding each other. Their souls spoke two different languages. She loved him too well not to lament and grieve that he could not understand her better; to find herself, as she so often did, utterly solitary and alone with her lover close by her side. But these feelings would, after all, be only transitory; the evil hour as *he* called it; she did not herself know what to call it; though unhappy, it was so earnest, so full of truth and depth, passed away. Smiles revisited her sweet countenance; she laughed at his drollery; accepted his gay devotion to herself with apparent pleasure; and could almost have asked, as she felt often inclined to do, What could possibly be wanting?

To-day, however, just at the very time when the charming

scene which surrounded her, the balmy breeze as it fanned her cheek, the bright sun, the rising and falling waves, the fluttering canvass above, the lulling motion of the vessel, had all conspired to raise these old feelings in her mind; she was left undisturbed to talk with Harry: to listen to that voice so touching and melodious; to hear the simple, truthful accents from his lips; to observe his kindness and his goodness; and to sympathize with the tender melancholy, but deep and sincere earnestness of his character. She felt what it was to esteem and to approve. And when Lord George, after having done his duty in the dancing way, came and sat down by her, and began to talk as usual, she missed something: his conversation wanted interest, solidity; his voice, the inexpressible charm of deep feeling.

She could understand where all the charm was gone, which she had once found so prevailing.

He saw that she was graver than usual, and he began to accuse her of it; but he had not the remotest idea of its possible cause. To be jealous of Harry Wilmington would have been too ridiculous. But he began to wish to attract her attention again to himself; he never liked these indifferent moods, in which she seemed occupied with feelings and thoughts he could not share; which he neither understood nor strove to understand.

"How you sit there, Flavia, looking into the water! What can you see in it? It is so strange of you to take this sudden meditative humour upon an occasion when everybody ought to *make* themselves gay, if they don't feel so. What is the matter with you, Flavia?"

"I don't know: nothing; I was only thinking. There is something in these sort of mixed parties that makes one think. Do you know, George, that I have been hearing a very sad story?"

"A sad story! Pooh, nonsense! Who could be so stupid as to tell you sad stories just at such a time as this? Sad stories! as if there were not plenty of sad stories going about in the world, and sad things going on too; but who can help it, and what's the use of thinking about them? I wonder who the *malencontreux fâcheux* could be who filled your pretty head with sad stories, and to-day of all days."

"It was my own fault: I asked for the story and it set me on thinking."

"On thinking! I wish you never would be set *on* thinking, as you call it; you can't think what an odd effect it has upon your face, Flavia, when you set *on* thinking, as you call it. I wonder what women have to do with thinking:

pretty women especially. The prettiest, even you, can't stand a studying expression. I declare, as you sat there leaning over the water in a brown study just now, I could hardly believe it was you; you looked so ugly."

She took no notice of this speech, except turning a little away from him, and sighing so slightly that it was almost imperceptible.

"Come now, Flavia," he went on, "don't be so tiresome; don't sit there in that stupid, unsociable manner. I declare" (sitting down by her and speaking in a most affectionate way) "you don't know how I am longing for a little fun and chat. That creature, that Miss Emerson, I'm perfectly sick of telling all sort of lies and nonsense to her. I want a little rational nonsense with you, my darling Flavia, to refresh my spirits."

"You are very reasonable in your expectations, I must say. You exhaust your spirits and wear yourself to death with paying attentions to a young lady because she's excessively handsome, and then, when you are tired, you come and waste your tediousness upon me."

"Oh, we are vexed, are we?" said he, smiling, and looking very engaging, as he hoped and believed, at least. "Sweetest of all possible Flavias, can you do your poor slave so much honour as to be jealous?"

"No," said she, "I am not jealous, because I know you don't care for Miss Emerson the least bit in the world; and besides, I am not quite sure whether I should care the least bit in the world if you did."

"Provoking girl! how can you say so? Besides, I am sure it's not true," said he, with the familiarity of cousinhood and long acquaintance which give a singular ease to their relations. "Now own it's not true, there's a good girl, own you were a little, little tiny bit vexed and out of humour, and inclined to be moody, and look for fishes in the water."

"Not in the least, upon my word. Ah! if you knew."

"If I knew what?"

She lifted up her face, and looked at him.

"If I knew what?"

"How far, far away, my thoughts at that moment were? I really don't know whether you would feel particularly flattered, George."

"Why, I don't suppose, seriously speaking, that you cannot think of other things besides my unlucky self; though I don't take my revenge, I think of nothing but you, or with reference to you."

"George," she said, turning quite round towards him, "one thing I think I ought to think of: letting you make

so many foolish speeches; I wish you would leave off this trick you have of ever flattering me. I don't like it, indeed I don't, at all."

He laughed.

"I wish you would not always laugh when I speak seriously," said Flavia.

"Why, what else can I do? That little wise way that you put on has such a ridiculous effect upon your queen of the fairy face. I hate to see you serious, and you ought not to be angry with me, if I am vexed when these fits come over you, for you never seem to care a rush for me at such times, and I think you do care a little, little, tiny, wee bit for me at others. Don't you, Flavia?"

"Yes, I like you very well as *a cousin*," said she, laying an emphasis upon the word, "but I think it is very silly to talk so much about our feelings. All relations ought to love and like each other, if they can; but the less they talk about likes and dislikes, so much the better."

"Heigh-day!" said he, and then he laughed again, and said he had changed his mind, and that her demure little wise ways were ineffably enchanting to him; and after this sort of half-joking, half-serious admiration, which expression teased her, but which she did not know exactly how to meet, he rose and went away, and joined Selwyn, who was standing talking with Caroline at the other end of the little vessel.

I had been observing that couple with considerable interest. I told you that I thought I had never seen a more feeling and expressive countenance than that of Selwyn, it was sickly and very pale, and his air was marked with extreme langour. He formed a strong and painful contrast to the fine, vigorous, spirited girl who stood beside him, talking to him in a pleasant, animated manner. Harry was of the party. It was easy for any one to observe, when he and Selwyn were together, how great a pleasure they took in each other's society. They seemed to be united by the strongest ties of friendship, and so, in truth, they were.

Harry loved Selwyn with his whole heart; there was something particularly attractive to a man of his disposition, in the very delicacy of health which rendered Selwyn little acceptable to most youths of his age. Harry was by nature little inclined or fitted to take a share in the stirring amusements common to young men. He was neither a hunter, nor a cricketer, nor a boater. And Selwyn was, by the extreme delicacy of his constitution, equally incapacitated. The two boys, when at school, whilst the rest were engaged in their noisy sports, might be seen sauntering slowly together under

the alders and willows, which fringed a rapid and glassy river that ran by the play-ground.

The other boys would laugh at these two, who lived by the river-side without ever thinking of being fishermen; took no delight in impaling a miserable worm, and were not dexterous enough to cast a fly; but so long as they were together, they heeded it not, they had courage enough to stand the laugh.

Selwyn, who had not the slightest tincture of Harry's shyness or awkward feelings in society, appreciated to the full the superiority of his mind. His bodily sufferings made him in some respects a physical coward. He required support; he wanted some one on whose judgment and strength of mind he could rely when his own spirits were trembling and his nerves failing. He found this in Harry. He was capable of appreciating the rare qualities of his friend: his disinterested temper, his simple heart, his excellent understanding, his acute perception of things, his accurate observation of men, and his stores of general information, all secretly acquired, as it were. Qualities obscured to the common eye by his external defects, but which Selwyn felt as if he loved and valued the more because he loved and valued them almost alone.

There was another feeling that united Selwyn to his friend, and that was the indignant sort of pity he felt for the manner in which he was treated by his father. It drove Selwyn half mad to see the flashy and shallow man quite incapable of even estimating the extent of his son's faculties, oppressing him by the kind of contemptuous indulgence with which he treated him, as a poor, well-meaning fellow, whom he loved for his good nature, but whom it was vain to expect would ever make that figure in the world which was aspired to by his all-accomplished self.

There was something in the way Harry submitted to this; the piety with which, apparently blind to his father's faults, he yielded to this assumed superiority, and suffered himself to sink into insignificance by his side, which angered Selwyn, whilst it made him ready to adore that perfect absence of all selfish vanity or ambition, that childlike freedom from guile, which blinded a man of an understanding so excellent as that of his friend to the defects of his father's character.

Whether it was the effect of those early childish impressions which his mother had so sedulously imprinted; whether it was that the boy was really dazzled by his father's brilliant appearance; whether it arose from that humility which seemed innate, or that it was the mere consequence of his

possessing a truly affectionate heart, Selwyn saw that Harry loved his father with a tenderness and piety which few sons are found to bestow upon fathers far more worthy.

But I have wandered from the group. I linger and loiter as I go along, and seem to dislike to proceed with the history I have undertaken. I, gifted with the prescience of the prophet, knowing the tale which lies before me, sigh, cast down, hesitate, and resume my pen.

Selwyn loved Harry, but he adored Caroline. That peculiar temper of his, resulting from his physical delicacy, that disposition at once so feeble and so strong, found every feeling excited and satisfied near her. Her strength of character, her force and energy, were a support to his spirits and nerves, and yet in harmony with what he would himself have been had he been blest with such a hale, strong, instrument of life, if I may so call it, as hers was.

Her simple, straightforward, generous character, was in accordance with all his fine moral taste could desire or imagine of best; and her love and devotion for her brother, her deep sense of his qualities, her feeling for his position, were sympathetic with his own.

Selwyn loved Caroline devotedly; but he had never, even in moments of the most boyish unreserve, hinted his attachment to her. He thought himself one who would probably never live to become a man or take a part in life. He did not expect to live to share in the happiness of youth; his anticipations were but of an early grave. He never thought of endeavouring to secure future bliss; he was content to float along with the present. Caroline was his friend, his attached and most affectionate friend; he looked as yet no farther. And she was so devoted to her brother, that there seemed room in her heart for no other attachment. She loved Selwyn on her side, but it was less than she loved Harry.

And now she and Selwyn are there standing talking together, and I am looking at them in my quiet old man's way, and watching them in their several parts, if I may use the term. And now Lord George joins them, and begins to talk in his lively manner to Caroline, and Selwyn, who cannot banter, stands by and smiles, and looks amused; and Harry turns away and looks to the other end of the vessel, and takes a few steps that way, and stops as if irresolute, and then two beautiful eyes are raised from watching the waves, and turned to him, and he is at Flavia's side.

And he stayed by her, longing to talk with her again, and finding it impossible to know how to begin, or what to say.

She evidently wished to have some more talk with him. They both felt very shy, but at last the ice was broken by Harry saying—

"You left two people very much delighted with your condescension, Miss L——, this morning: poor Mrs. Freeman and her daughter."

"Condescension! What a word! That's not like you, for it's not quite sincere. I am glad—no, I should say sorry—that they should feel in the least in that way; for I still think that a history such as theirs lifts people far above poor little things like me, who have no history at all."

He sat down by her.

"Did you keep that feeling when you had talked with them?" he said, rather to keep up the conversation he so delighted in keeping, than from the interest of the subject to him; for I am ashamed to say he cared very little about it.

"I am ashamed to own it," she answered; "don't make me say anything about good Mrs. Freeman. You knew me better than I did myself; but I think the daughter is interesting."

"Then you were very good; for you had the kindness to talk to Mrs. Freeman a long time, and the politeness to appear very much interested in what she was saying."

Flavia coloured a little.

He thought he never saw anything so beautiful as that sweet blush, but he little understood its meaning. He would have been indeed a happy man had the slightest idea of its cause crossed his mind.

"I beg your pardon," said he, with simplicity; "I did not mean to accuse you of insincerity, because I said I thought you so polite. We are not bound to yawn in people's faces, you know."

"I did not know that I appeared particularly interested in what she was saying; and yet I believe I was," said she, and her eyes were lifted up and withdrawn; "she told me a beautiful history."

"Did she venture at such a moment upon her own?"

"Partly—yes; she is a person, I fancy, who has little but her own affairs to talk about."

"Some part of her history is certainly beautiful."

"In that I quite agree with you."

And then she rose, and they joined the others, and this apparently insignificant conversation ended.

But there was a something, an indescribable something, that remained to haunt the memories of both.

Harry was more in love than ever with this fair creature.

She thought very much more about him than she had ever done in her life, and began to wonder whether she ought to allow Lord George's flattering speeches to be continued; whether that language which had been his from quite early boyhood, and to which she had grown so well accustomed that she thought little about it, ought not to be checked. She could scarcely believe that there was anything very serious in a passion which so lightly expressed itself in words. She already felt that such accents are not those of true love, not the form in which serious attachments find expression.

She could not help feeling that there was something in Henry's eyes, something in the tone of his voice, that hinted at sentiments far different, far more serious, far more interesting.

At all events, the mystery, the doubt, that hung around that character; the reserve, the shyness even, the very embarrassment, which seemed as a veil to obscure his qualities, exercised a strange fascination over her.

She was not romantic, though Lord George called her so; and many, could they have known all that passed in her mind, might have thought her so too. It was not an imaginary life of excitement and rapture that she dreamed of or longed for; it was real earnest life, a life of strong affections, strenuous efforts; of duties even, though painful, of which she dreamed.

And what was the life she led?

One of the most perfect ease and enjoyment; caressed and flattered by all who surrounded her, and truly beloved by all whom she loved. And in the wise and kind grandmother, under whose protection she lived, possessing what is the crown of youthful life—a real, loving, partial, devoted friend and guardian—one on whose wisdom she could rely for guidance, on whose tenderness for sympathy, on whose protection for safety.

The world never presented a fairer prospect than that of the life before her; the world never possessed a sweeter home than that in which she harboured.

There were but few things wanting: difficulty, which calls forth energy; contradiction, which exercises temper; sorrow, which exalts faith; death, which teaches truth.

These conditions of our best existence, these conditions of all earnest, I might say all truly happy existence, were wanting; and Flavia was, in a degree, what Rasselas found himself in his Happy Valley.

CHAPTER VII.

Fairest and foremost of the train that wait
On man's most dignified and happiest state,
Whether we name thee Charity or Love,
Chief grace below, and all in all above.—COWPER.

I AM tempted to make a little digression, and say something more of the grandmother.

That aged woman, whose elevated rank was indeed her least ornament; though the venerable qualities she possessed received, no doubt, a certain increased interest, and excited a higher admiration, from that lofty station which she occupied, and justly.

We ought to be just to those above us, as to those below us. We ought to endeavour to estimate the difficulties and temptations which beset those placed above reproof, and out of the reach of ordinary contradictions. We, who are hedged in, as it were, on every side by narrow circumstances, or by limited influence, or by the restraints of those to whom we owe obedience, or by the tempers and infirmities of those with whom we have to live—not in extensive palaces and castles, where every one is independent in his own apartment, but often in the close connection of small rooms, domestic meals, and mutual wants and services; we who occupy some one or other of the varied stages of middle life, are apt to cast an eye of envy—good-natured envy is my meaning here—upon those who, in the possession of more extended advantages—for advantages in one sense we cannot deny them to be—are endowed with power, wealth, and influence. Means so fruitful to supply all that the heart of man can wish for himself or desire for others.

But we forget one thing in making an estimate of the happiness of possessing such things; and the thing we forget is our weakness.

The trammels that pamper the ordinary man's life are not so much obstructions as supports. He that may do all that he will has need, in truth, of a most powerful and righteous

will; to will what he ought: what is best for others, what is best even for himself.

What energy, what generous determination, what a power of self-government, what virtuous resolution, must have been exercised, when he who might do with impunity almost anything that is wrong, adheres steadfastly to what is right! when he who has the means to command every indulgence is temperate and self-denying; when he to whom every infirmity of temper would be forgiven, is patient and gentle; when he who can make speedy amends for any injustice committed under the temptation of the moment, commits none; when he who has had no education of suffering is pitying to others; when he who might perform almost every duty by proxy, chooses to perform them in person.

The old man's walks in this life lead him little in the way of courts; but she who sits upon a pinnacle is seen in a certain manner, even by those upon the distant plain; and never are the weekly prayers repeated in her behalf but he feels the justice of thus calling down the blessings of a higher assistance for one whose virtues, not forced upon her, as it were, by external circumstances, as in so great a degree is the case with us all, must find their sole source in her own righteous and determined heart; whose faults, not repressed by the harsh influences from without, must be eradicated by her own firm and courageous will.

Duty thus fulfilled deserves what it meets with: the love and esteem of a vast nation's heart, and the animating and never-dying voice of historic applause.

But to return to one who in her lofty sphere had fulfilled all the duties of Christian wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend; whose charities had been wide as her influence; whose love unbounded; whose industry, energy, and application untiring; with whom each day was as a branch of life's tree, producing noble fruit; and who now, loaded with the well-earned honours of a well-spent life, stood there, bending under the weight of years, and gradually sinking to that final decay which spares not the fairest or the best.

I happened, little as it is my lot to associate with the great ones of this world, to have been during my own long life placed in circumstances which had enabled me to watch the course of hers. She was some score years, however, older than myself; for the events I relate took place some thirty years ago. But as a child, a boy, a youth, a man, that woman, that duchess, had been known to me. She was, as it was natural she should be, the cynosure of our neighbourhood. I was a young child when, beautiful as the day,

adorned with all her bridal splendour, with eyes that seemed to my young fancy like twin stars, face as of an angel, form and gestures that were grace itself, I first beheld that fair and youthful creature, then just wedded to our duke.

I remember my father, whose qualities rendered him ever a favourite, and always at home in such societies, taking me up to her landau, as she sat upon the race-course, surrounded by admiring men of rank and fashion, with three other beautiful young ladies—but, ah! how inferior, I thought, in the carriage with her. I was an only son, and a favourite, and she knew it, and had asked for the little boy; and I was lifted up in my father's arms. She could not reach to kiss me, as I hoped she would, but she stretched out a lily-white hand all sparkling with jewels, and patted my proud and glowing cheek.

That same day, too, I saw her standing in the grand stand. I thought she looked as Romeo says Juliet looked—

> Like some heaven-starred messenger
> When he bestrides the bosom of the clouds.

I never shall forget the resplendent loveliness of that face and figure. Children are great admirers of beauty, and the pictures impressed upon their memory as children they retain, and dwell upon with the riper judgment of advancing years. Years have not taught me to lower my admiration of that picture, but to wonder how it is that loveliness so exquisite seems now no longer to belong to our social life.

The duke stood by her. I recollect him, too. He was not to be compared to his fair partner in point of personal beauty, yet I have seldom seen such an engaging-looking person. His figure was manly, well-knit, and well-sized; his face handsome enough; his manners polished, but plain; but there was a something so simple, so truthful, so honest, if I may use the word, so thoroughly English; all that English should be; that it was impossible to look upon him and not to love him.

This sweet creature was fortunate; but how many in her rank have been thus fortunate also, and yet have thrown the rich treasure away! exchanging domestic love for the empty triumphs of worldly admiration, or for the wicked and forbidden pleasure of ensnaring other hearts.

But not of such was my charmer.

She loved her husband; she believed in, and honoured her God; she understood His law, and with all the force of her strong, and pure, and righteous heart, that law she strove to fulfil. She bore her husband six children, to whom no mo-

ther was more tender, about whom no mother more solicitous. She spared not fatigue or exertion, nor even privation in their cause. She has lain upon a mattress upon the floor, whilst her children in the hooping-cough were suffering around her. She had sat up, wearied and faint, to support their sinking heads. Hard did she labour to instil into them the principles which guided her own life; but less happy in her children than in her husband, these efforts were not altogether successful.

She was doomed to be an instance of that inexplicable failure which sometimes disappoints the best directed efforts. The temptations of rank and fortune, which had been powerless over her own character, proved too strong for theirs. She had to weep over the grave of some, delicate, frail, and tender, who grew up to resemble herself; to weep far bitterer tears over the indifference, the heartlessness, the contradictions of those who lived and gave themselves to the world. The sorrows of the mother she bore with fortitude and resignation, when they came from the hand of God; with patience, candour, temper, judgment, when those harsher ones assailed her which proceeded from the errors of man.

Her children left the parental home early: the sons to plunge into all the dissipations of fashionable life; the daughters to make splendid marriages. They rushed into the world; and the tender, sedulous trainings, and the gentle teachings, and the earnest exhortations, the piety she had so unremittingly endeavoured to instil, the high principles she had laboured to inculcate, were alike forgotten.

It was bitter to find her gentle remonstrances, her kind advice and counsel, her fond and anxious warnings, alike disregarded; her fine judgment in things, her experience, her love, valueless and of no avail. Many in such cases have yielded to the pain that agonises the disappointed mother's heart, when thus the years of ceaseless care, of painful self-sacrifice, the years of youth and childhood, close. Many have discarded from their hearts the ungrateful children who thus return a mother's generous love; but she was made of better stuff.

Her patience, the candour with which she judged, the readiness with which she forgave; the noble, generous love with which there she sat aside, waiting, in hope that would not be destroyed, a return to better things; waiting, in affection that would not fail, the hour when sorrow, difficulty, perplexity, or distress, would send them back to her arms, exceeds my power to describe.

She waited not entirely in vain. Her influence was in some

degree restored as her help might be needed. She exercised it for the benefit of all creatures who suffered themselves to yield to its power.

She had a hard trial, too, in her husband, the beloved of her soul. They had not been married half-a-dozen years before a fall from his horse in hunting, a blow upon the head, unsettled that fine machinery upon which intellectual, and, still more mysteriously, even moral health in some degree depends.

The duke did not become absolutely incapacitated, but his fine intellect was weakened; that prospect of taking a forward part in political life for which his gifts had so admirably fitted him, and to which she looked forward with so much pride, was at an end.

The promising young man henceforward was only fit for his own domestic circle and that of intimate friends. His nerves, too, were deranged; his temper, poor fellow! in spite of all his endeavours, too often irritable; his power of exciting love seemed diminished as his dependence upon the love of others increased.

He would have exhausted the affection and patience of many a wife, but hers was inexhaustible. Divine pity succeeded to delighted admiration; tenderness supplied the place of rapturous joy.

He was, however, fully sensible of all this devotion. The recompense of her fervid attachment was not denied. He died in her arms, blessing her with words whilst voice was left, commending her to that God who could alone reward her, recompensing her by the ineffable tenderness which filled his eyes till death drew the impenetrable veil between them.

He left her a lovely widow, and a widow she remained. The highest offers in the land—fortune, fame, splendour, worth, and intellect—were at her feet; but her heart was in the grave with her first and only love, and she remained alone.

And now she is sinking slowly into years. The well-spent day is coming to a close, and the shades of night are drawing on.

The active spirit no longer urges to exertion; that frame of healthful symmetry, formed, as it should seem, for action, has lost its power. The golden bowl is breaking; the wheel at the cistern abates its swift motion. She feels the necessity for rest, and she has earned a right to it.

I used to be more struck with the way in which she took this change than with any other period of this beautiful life.

She, who used to be so active, and was never to be seen unemployed; who, when not engaged in the discharge of some duty, seemed to find such delight in the cultivation of one of the finest intellects I ever met with; she, who was to be seen reading, writing, discoursing in her animated way, in full enjoyment of the rare society she assembled about her, drinking in knowledge with the healthy eagerness of a fine mind; she, the soul of every society in which she bore a part; the delighted reader of every new and interesting book; whose stores of knowledge exercised every day, as was her faculty for imparting it; this animated, ardent creature might now be seen quiet and unemployed, reposing in her arm-chair, most often a listener to what was going on, rarely a speaker; and when she spoke, not with the garrulity of age, but with the brevity of one whom long experience had made wise.

She read very little now; and when I used to offer to read to her some of those new works with which the world of the day is most often occupied, she would in general decline it.

I remember her thanking me one day for not being weary of repeating my offers in this way; but she told me that she found her powers of attention so much diminished, that nothing but what was light and trifling could be received into her mind without a painful and wearying effort.

"I have perceived this incapacity growing upon me for some time. I was very much mortified at first, and resolved by no means to yield to it. I persisted in reading as much as usual, but I found I could no longer do it and do right. The ideas confused instead of enlarging my understanding; the occupation exhausted instead of refreshing my spirits; that became painful which used to be the recreation of my leisure hours, and unfitted, instead of preparing me for what was yet to be done. I am of great age now; few are allowed to attain to such an age, but those who look forward to it may do it with peaceful hope. This incapacity, which to your young mind, my friend, appears so grievous, is but to life what the repose of the evening is to a hard-spent day. We enjoy sitting still. My mind is not altogether an unfurnished chamber," added she, gently, "and my heart teems with tender memories. The anguish which attends the thinking of those we loved so dearly, and who are gone hence, I feel no more. I am so near the grave that I can think of those who are already upon the other side of it, with something of the pleasure with which one anticipates the return of a long absent friend after a wearying separation in some distant country; whom one has not yet received, but whom one certainly soon shall."

One interest, indeed, was still lively as ever: the inte-

rest which was excited by Flavia. There were active duties still to be performed for Flavia, and it was in order to be enabled to discharge these well, that this admirable person hoarded so carefully the little strength that was left; gave so much time to quiet, meditative repose, and refused herself the now too exhausting amusement of the mind.

In this beloved grandchild the aged woman found a compensation for many disappointments. She loved and was interested in all her grandchildren, but she had little to do with any of them except Flavia and Lord George, who had both by circumstances been thrown almost altogether under her care. She loved Lord George with all her heart. There is something in the petulant gaiety of a lively, thoughtless, but very well-disposed youth, that is particularly delightful to old age, especially as when, in this case, he is most affectionately attached on his side. Lord George loved his grandmother with all his heart, and truly, as a matter of individual taste and preference. This was a sweet drop in her cup. Wherever he went, with whomsoever he had been, he never seemed sorry to come back to her. He was always gay, full of spirits and fun, when at home with her; had always abundance to tell her, opened his heart to her, made her the confidant of all his faults and follies; and no laugh seemed to sound sweeter in his ears than that with which she greeted his lively sallies. The old lady and the young spark of fashion were the dearest friends in the world.

But the sentiment inspired by Flavia was of a deeper and far more earnest character. The lovely little girl who had been one of those delightful children that seem born to gladden the eyes and excite the admiration of every one, had ripened into the gay, sweet-tempered, easy, affectionate young thing, in whom few suspect the latent qualities which all this almost childish grace and beauty covered. But the duchess, amid all the enchantments of the charming trifler, had early detected the qualities that lay concealed: the firmness of purpose, the soundness of understanding, the deep devotion and power of love. She prized this treasure almost the more dearly, because she felt as if it were a possession almost confined to herself. They were hidden perfections, by few but herself appreciated: a hoard of bliss which no one seemed to share.

Flavia loved the duchess as no one else, much as all loved her, could love her. The rest loved her for many reasons, and according to their power of loving. Flavia was capable of estimating the full value of that to which she was so tenderly attached. It requires a certain sympathy before the full beauty of some characters can be even perceived.

And now they are sitting together after the day of the yacht party.

The duchess, fatigued by the exertion, is leaning backward in her arm-chair, her feet upon a footstool; upon which Flavia sits, and holds her hand, and prattles, as is her wont, to this dearest friend, commenting upon the characters and the events which made up the history of the last day.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wilt thou adjure to guide the heavenly car,
And with thy daring folly burn the world?
Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?—SHAKSPERE.

"I DON'T like that Mr. Wilmington, I cannot like him. Don't think, dear madam, it is because he is vulgar, which he certainly is, and I think in the most repulsive form of vulgarity, that which is fine and flashy; but there is something false in that face: it is excessively handsome and smiling, and all that; but it is false."

"Not false in one thing at least, I believe, Flavia. It promises good nature and indulgence; and I have heard its promises are performed. He has been a kind husband, and a very indulgent father: he denies his children nothing."

"I believe so; and yet he does not make his children, one of them at least, happy. That is evident to me, in Harry Wilmington's case. As for Caroline, she has so much strength of character, that her happiness seems to depend upon herself. No, indeed, grandmamma, I cannot abide Mr. Wilmington. What a fuss he made yesterday! So full of the part of host he had to play; so obsequious, yet so vain. Do you know, dear grandmamma, there is a certain sort of fine and rather sharp-featured, thin-lipped, smiling, handsome face, particularly when united to a tall, elegant, slender figure, that is my abomination?"

"And do you know, dear Flavia, if there is a thing which I cannot endure, it is to go and receive a person's hospitality, and then come home and criticise his manner? I would rather at any other time in the year have heard your remarks upon Mr. Wilmington."

"Which, after all, grandmamma, you think just. Come, confess that you do, dearest granny."

"No," said the old lady; "I have tasted of his bread and salt."

"Do you like Caroline and Harry, grandmamma? You have not seen much of either of them; but you observe with half an eye. As I may not discuss the one we can neither of us praise, for I know you think me right in what I say, let us talk of those we cannot praise too much."

"Cannot praise too much! I grant you that Caroline is very charming, a delightful person: but her brother! I confess I rather wonder at my sweet Flavia, who, whether she can see with half an eye or not, has two very good ones in her head; I confess I rather wonder my sweet Flavia can find no defect in that young man."

"Grandmamma, there are defects I do care for, and defects I don't care for. I would rather a man were awkward than flashy, too shy than too assured, reserved than forward, humble than self-sufficient. I dislike the defects of the father; I care not for those of the son. But that is, I believe, because, wrongly or rightly, I associate truth, honesty, delicacy, sensibility, with one set of defects, and shallowness, falseness, insincerity, want of delicacy, and coarseness of feeling with the other."

The duchess fondly stroked her hand over the head of her favourite.

"Besides, Harry is not happy; I am sure he is not; and Mr. Wilmington seems careering down life with his sails swelled by a full gale of prosperity. I never saw any man apparently so well satisfied with himself and all that belongs to him: another mark, I think, of dulness of perception and want of feeling. Except, I may say, as respects his son: he holds him cheap enough, I can see that; because, forsooth, he is not so handsome as his showy self. And then Harry has so much sensibility that this depresses him in his own opinion; I can see it does; and there, I own, Harry is not to be praised."

"You talked a good deal with him, I saw, my dear. Had you seen much of him during your last visit to Caroline? You did not tell me much about him."

"No; I met him only once or twice. But I saw enough to make me aware of this, and to make me feel vexed and sorry for him. I cannot endure to see merit depressed by the arrogance and assumption of demerit. It seems to me often to happen in this world; the worse holding down the better, and that merely from the want of the very qualities

to which the better owes its superiority. It always makes me fly to arms. I long to assert that better cause. I feel interested and engaged in this matter more than I can say."

"My dear female Quixote, take care what you are about," said the duchess, gently; "a young man ——"

"Oh!" said Flavia, laughing, "I quite forget he is a young man. One never looks upon Harry as one does upon other young men. I never feel ashamed of praising *him;* I could do it to his face. He is not the least like other young men."

"Not very like dear George, certainly," remarked the grandmother, evidently pleased with this last speech.

She was not quite so well pleased with the rest.

"Lord George like *him!* Goodness! how different they are!"

"George has certainly not had the advantage of being bound down by the arrogance of *de*merit," said the duchess. "We have all spoiled him more than enough; yet he is a dear fellow. He has resisted the ill effects of boundless indulgence wonderfully; he is a dear fellow; time and experience will make him all we can wish."

It was now Flavia's turn to be silent. She made no remark upon this eulogy, but sat there at her grandmother's feet, musing. At last she said—

"I wonder whether Mr. Wilmington is really so excessively rich as everybody says he is? What an immensity of money he seems to spend!"

"There seems no reason to doubt his wealth, dear Flavia; I never heard it questioned, and I should be sorry indeed to question it. To a man engaged in commerce, even the idle expression of a doubt may be an injury, a blight, a check; the small beginning of ruin. Pray, my love, do not let your dislike to Mr. Wilmington's somewhat too obsequious smiles lead you to hint at anything of this kind. You do not know the mischief you might do."

"Thank you, dear granny, for putting me upon my guard! I will take care, I assure you, not to give any one but yourself the benefit of my speculations; but as we are quite alone, I may venture to say that I don't think Mr. Wilmington is so very, very rich as he pretends, or at least appears to be; not exactly intending to impose upon anybody, for I think he is above that, but his expenses seem enormous. He never denies himself anything; and yet I could fancy sometimes that he was vexed about money. And then that poor dear Mrs. Wilmington is such a helpless being! You cannot conceive, grandmamma, what a cipher she is in her family; and yet an expensive cipher in her way. And I must own Mr.

Wilmington spares nothing upon her, nor, indeed, upon his children either; but the whole is managed in so different a manner from what things are here. There is no order, no system, no plan, no discipline. Poor Mrs. Wilmington is forced to leave everything to her housekeeper; and Mr. Wilmington is completely in the hands of his butler, who is, to tell the truth, a still finer gentleman than himself. The butler, he seems to think, because he once lived with lord somebody or other, must understand things better than even he himself does; so the man has it all his own way. I have seen Caroline and Harry look annoyed about it; but Mrs. Wilmington is too poorly to be troubled with such things. If I were a wife and a mother, I think I would hold the reins though I were dying, rather than abandon them to such dependants."

"Happily, my little love, you have never known what it is to feel dying, which that suffering creature feels, I believe, every day of her life; but I agree with you. I wish she could make more exertion, however painful, for I believe it would be better for her, and for all; but in some things she has played her part well: she has been sedulous in bringing up her children; and many of the good qualities you attribute to your favourites are owing to her care. But do you know, my love, though I checked you at first in the expression of them, your remarks have set me thinking?"

She, in fact, mused for a short time, and her reflections were upon the subject of Flavia. There was something in the young girl's manner of speaking of Harry Wilmington which had, for the first time in her life, suggested the thought, that, in spite of his disadvantages, he might have created for himself some interest in her heart, though she could hardly think it possible that he could prove a serious rival to Lord George. As little had it ever suggested itself to her mind before that Harry might not inherit that immense wealth upon the death of his father for which the world gave him credit. The two ideas now presented came very disagreeably together. A slight apprehension that Flavia might some time or other entertain a decided preference for Harry, agreed ill with the doubt as to Harry's prospects.

Now, though the duchess was disinterested, and had no desire to make an ambitious match for her favourite, which, indeed, was manifest by her partiality for the idea of Lord George, yet if Lord George were to be superseded, it ought to be by some person at least entitled from his rank or fortune to put in a claim. She felt as if she should be much to blame if she allowed a preference, which now amounted only

to a slight partiality, to ripen into more serious feelings, if there were any doubt as to the stability of that fortune upon which Harry's position in society depended.

"You have made me uncomfortable, Flavia," at last she said.

"How, dearest grandmamma? I hope not by what I have been saying. I chatter to you, you have always allowed it, of everything that comes into my head. I don't know how I came to talk so much of the Wilmingtons. I am sure I don't care if Mr. Wilmington went smash to-morrow, as far as he is concerned; but, for Caroline and Harry, it would be a shocking thing to be sure; but I don't fear that. Only when people talk of Harry Wilmington having some time or other such an immense fortune, all I can say is, that I very much doubt it."

"You think a great deal about him and his prospects, it seems to me, my dear."

"Do I? No, I don't think I do. I don't know why I have talked about them so much to-day. But I am so tired and good for nothing with the yachting yesterday; yet it was a beautiful scene. But I will try to find something to do."

She rose, and went to her piano-forte.

But the piano-forte seemed out of tune. She could neither sing nor play to please herself. She took a book; but the book did not interest her.

She sat down to her embroidery-frame. This did better; as her needle went in and out her thoughts could wander where they would, without injury to her employment.

The young people met frequently. The place they were at was one of those bathing-places where there is nothing to be seen or done except upon the sea-shore, or upon some esplanade, pier, or public walk.

The weather was warm and delightful: a season to spend one's life out-of-doors. The mother and the grandmother were much confined by their infirmities to their several houses. The young people went out by themselves: that is, in a party together. They mostly paraded up and down the esplanade, in front of the row of lodging-houses; and the mother and grandmother, from their respective windows, looked out, and served in a manner as chaperons.

The young ones might be seen, all five together, walking up and down; while the sea-breezes played in their hair and

garments, and the bright sun shone upon the sparkling waters, enjoying the sweetness of the air, the freshness of young spirits, and that easy intercourse which renders society so charming to youth.

Caroline and Flavia went arm-in-arm, Selwyn and Lord George beside them, and Harry rather thrown out—sometimes behind, sometimes upon the extreme left, walking in a musing mood, whilst the others were gaily chatting away.

The duchess, as she watched the group, felt the slight anxiety which had been awakened upon Flavia's account diminish. There certainly seemed no disposition upon the young man's part to make any pretension to her especial notice, and she seemed as gay and happy as possible without his attentions. Moreover, Lord George always came in after these friendly promenades in exuberant spirits.

Harry it was certain grew more grave and silent than ever. Anxiety, and care, and grief, that bitter foe to love, were in his heart. He usually walked a little apart when the rest were gaily chatting together, listening to that voice which was to his ear such sweet music, and, poor, imprudent fellow! suffering himself to dwell upon attractions already far too powerful for his peace, in utter hopelessness; for the idea of attempting to excite an answering feeling in her breast never crossed his mind as a possibility.

He was accustomed to suffer, and little of a calculator as to what was good for himself. The indifference to his own happiness amounted almost to a fault. In this case he was entirely regardless as to the risk he was running, and, indeed, to tell the truth, he felt that he had little happiness to risk.

I don't think he was at this time much annoyed by the presence of Lord George. He had been accustomed for so many years to look upon Flavia as some way or other set apart for that favourite of fortune that the idea had become habitual to him, and made a part in all future prospects.

He was happy to be allowed to enjoy so much of her society in this way; he had never imagined the possibility of enjoying more.

The day spent on board the yacht remained in his heart and memory as a day set apart—a day quite distinct from any other day of his existence—a day in which he had been really and almost perfectly happy: it left the sweetest recollections behind it; recollections upon which the heart can feed with ever-new delight.

Whilst Flavia prattled, Caroline and Selwyn conversed, and Lord George rattled away. The silent and meditative youth, amid many painful causes for reflection, was soothed

by the remembrance of words and looks that consoled and animated him forward in the path he thought pointed out for him.

His path of duty he began to believe would lie in ways the most irksome to his tastes; the most in contradiction to his ideas of happiness; the sacrifices which it demanded would be immense: nothing less than that of all his dearest tastes and inclinations. And yet, the sacrifice would never be appreciated, never even guessed by any of those who surrounded him. The course which it cost him such a heroic effort to determine upon was so exactly that which, according to the common routine of life, most young men pursued, that the cost it would demand in his particular case would never even be divined.

Flavia would never know what he had done for the sake of what he thought right: that sweetest reward, her approbation, would never attend the effort. He knew how precious a recompense it was, for he had tasted it once. It had fallen unexpectedly as the rich repayment of one good deed, which had been to him so easy, that he felt there was not the slightest merit in it; and now he cherished a tender and delicate pride in the thought of dedicating to her, as it were, in secret, an act of self-immolation, which would cost him so many struggles, and which he felt to include no less than the sacrifice of his life.

The state of his mother's health also added much to his present seriousness. He seemed to be more aware than his father, or even Caroline, of the increasing weakness which slowly gained ground upon her. Every day he fancied he saw her losing something of the little strength and energy she had possessed. Caroline, who was with her almost every hour, did not so much perceive this. It is a very common effect of being continually with an invalid of this description.

The son and the mother had many conversations together. She spoke to him of her approaching death. She had expected her death so often; for a number of years she had suffered from that terror of speedy death which was one painful symptom of her malady, that the feeling had ceased to excite attention in those around her. She knew she was not believed, and she ceased to express the apprehension.

But Harry, she felt, still would listen to her; and to him she said that she had so often most involuntarily and unwittingly been frightened about herself that she did not wonder no one was alarmed. "But this time, my boy, I feel that it will not be as it has been before: I shall not be long with my son.

"Harry, I have been a poor inefficient wife and mother, now that I look back upon my life, and recollect how little I have done; I feel that I could and ought to have done more. The distressing sense of languor to which I have yielded was, I know, a most incapacitating feeling; but this does not satisfy my conscience, as the certainty of absolute want of power would have done. It would have been very painful, very laborious for me to have performed what requires a very simple exertion upon the part of others; but I could have done it if I had had the courage to bear weariness and pain, and resist the love of that quiet in which alone I found existence comfortable.

"I did not sufficiently reflect upon the duty of self-inflicted pain. I had been brought up in a somewhat imperfect view of duty, and accustomed too much to think that, provided no positive injury were inflicted by it, self-indulgence was a slight fault in myself or any one; and therefore I had never been disciplined, nor had I attempted to discipline myself to endurance and self-denial. Such things were looked upon by those who had the charge of my education as superstitious notions. Everybody was to be as happy as they could; not as useful as they could, according to that system.

"Not to inflict pain, not to diminish the happiness of others we *were* taught; but the necessity of exertion in order to secure the welfare of others was not insisted upon; the necessity of preparing ourselves by early habit to play a useful and efficient part in such a world as this, by the practice of a somewhat severe self-discipline, never once thought of.

"I avoided exertions because they were so painful; exertions which it would have been in my power to make, could I have brought myself to despise the pain. Ah! Harry, where should I be now, if One had not despised pain for me?"

"Dearest of mothers, how can you talk so?" said her son, tenderly. "So suffering as your life has been, how can you reproach yourself for not having done what you were so little equal to do?"

"The power was in me; my conscience tells me so now, if I had resolutely determined to use it. But whether in my power or not, the evil has been the same. Excuses, or even just reasons, for the thing being left undone, do not *do* it.

"My dear boy!" looking at him with an anxious, melancholy expresssion, "that is a fearful text for a parent's heart, 'The sins of the parents are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation.' My Harry! what a prospect lies before me! I think I see our sins visited upon you."

"Dear mother, do not give way to such—forgive the expression—morbid feelings. Sins! How can you talk of sins in a course so innocent as yours, and, I may add, my father's? If he is fond of the world, is it not natural, formed to shine in it as he is?"

"Alas! my own, how differently do things appear to those who have arrived at that point where I stand now, upon the threshold of another world! What vain shadows do the distinctions, and the vanities, and the fluctuating pleasures of this world appear! Sins! I have learned too late how heavy are the sins of omission." Thus she lamented herself.

An impartial observer might have detected the latent weakness of her character even in these continued lamentations over her own short-comings. Not in the regret for wasted time; for what could be more just than such feelings? but in the manner in which she expressed her regrets; thus helplessly dwelling upon a painful subject. She did not, however, entirely give her time and thoughts to such feelings. During the few months which she lived after this time, she took every opportunity of talking seriously to her son.

She still adhered to her principle of not endeavouring to open the eyes of her children to their father's faults, to which, except in the above slight instance, she had never alluded. But her eye cleared to the perception of the vanity of worldly things; she more clearly perceived those errors in character which her partiality had hitherto concealed.

She could not hide from herself the truth, that Mr. Wilmington, in spite of all his apparent good nature, was a mere, thoughtless, extravagant, self-indulged spendthrift; vain of his wealth, and proud of displaying it in every form of extravagance; averse to business, and detesting unpleasant tasks; sedulously luxurious and ostentatious in his habits; and one whose sole aim in life it seemed to be to outshine others of his own rank, rival those of a rank above him.

During the last half-year of her tedious indisposition, though he had never ceased to be kind in his manners and purpose—nay, in providing the means for her comfort and amusement—yet she could not but perceive that the melancholy of a sick-room, the dismal prospect of approaching death, was more than he could submit to. Anything so repugnant to his feelings and disagreeable he could not bring himself to endure. To a man with so little real tenderness of heart, nothing is so uninteresting and annoying as a sick-room. It was a dangerous habit of Mr. Wilmington to fancy that neglected duty was to be atoned for by calling upon his purse. He felt that he was less with his wife than he ought

to be, and he therefore was boundless in the expense he incurred on her account, and often in the most useless manner. A few words of real tenderness would have done more for her than all the expensive delicacies he purchased. She knew he spent much of his time with the dashing Mrs. Emerson; and she heard of her beautiful daughter; and she looked at Caroline, and sighed.

Caroline, however, as yet was young and unsuspicious: she little imagined what anticipation it was which clouded the last sad hours of the wife and mother. The idea of this sort of prospective attachment never entered her head. Young creatures at her age, if rightly-minded, are incapable of suspecting in others what would be so offensive to their feelings of loyalty, decency, and tenderness.

In her conversations with Henry, the mother never alluded in the remotest manner to that subject; but she did to another—his father's circumstances. Her eye, as I have said, purified by the near approach of death, she began to perceive that the lavish extravagance in which she had been content to share was not only wrong, but possibly dangerous. She recollected her husband's irregularity in his accounts, and the entire want of system or arrangement in his expenditure; his dislike to business; his long absences from town upon the most trivial causes; and she saw before her the faces of his two partners.

Estcourt, with that sharp, satirical eye, that cynical face, those cold, quiet manners, so exactly the reverse of those of her gay, thoughtless husband; and Jones, that sturdy, stolid, steady man of pounds and pence, devoted heart and soul to the sole object of acquiring wealth, and who never missed an opportunity or scrupled at taking an advantage. And then she recollected, with a sigh, that the only real friend her husband possessed in the world, Mr. Craiglethorpe, was far away in the East Indies. He had been there, indeed, for many years, during which her husband's habits of inattention and carelessness of expense had considerably increased.

These thoughts and anxieties, not in a clear, distinct, courageous, truthful manner, but half and half—irresolutely, hesitating—saying little, implying much—doubting of her own impressions one time, full of cruel conviction at another—she infused into Harry's mind.

It was a wretched state into which she threw him by this want of courage and sincerity; he did not like to interrogate her upon subjects from the consideration of which she seemed to shrink with so much pain; yet the most distressing doubts began to perplex him.

These conversations, however, it was which first directed his attention to the state of his father's fortune; for the great expense at which he lived had been from infancy such a matter of course, that it had never entered into the boy's head to doubt the abundance of means from which effects so copious without intermission flowed.

There arose a painful inquiry as to what duty demanded on his part. The wish of his whole life had been to travel. He had a hunger after information: that rational and praiseworthy thirst of the soul which had become with him an almost irresistible desire; and Selwyn and he had planned a tour over Europe and in the East, which was to occupy two or three years: years which, how could either of them better employ? The health of Selwyn, they both flattered themselves, would improve whilst travelling; and as they could afford to spend abundance of time as well as money, they were to proceed as leisurely as consideration upon that head might demand. Harry felt, and felt justly, that nothing would be of so much service to him in assisting him to overcome his constitutional defects, as thus mingling with men of all descriptions, and exposing himself to each variety of circumstance. Everything had been arranged between them for years; it had been their ultimate purpose from boyhood, the termination of one act of their lives, to which they looked forward with the highest satisfaction.

The plan had been delayed upon account of the state of Henry's mother's health: it was plain that she could not have borne the separation. The subject, therefore, out of tenderness for her infirmity, had never been mentioned to her. She was, consequently, not at all aware of the sacrifice she was exacting from her son, when she entreated him to remain near his father, and assist him in the management of his affairs; making the request with an earnestness he found quite irresistible, without, however, fully explaining her reasons. He could not withhold from a mother, in such a state, the promise she almost dragged from him—not to leave his father; and yet, at the very moment he was making it, he doubted whether the sacrifice of all his dearest inclinations was founded upon any rational good, or merely demanded by her sickly and exaggerated terrors. However, the sacrifice was made: Selwyn started upon his travels alone; Harry remained with his family.

It was a melancholy parting.

The poor sufferer died in doubt, irresolution, and ill-defined terrors, as she had lived.

She was a believer, without a strengthening faith; amiable and affectionate, without self-devotion or courage; sensible of her defects, repentant, and contrite, without power to correct or effort to amend.

Her life had been like a confused skein of delicate and valuable thread, tangled for want of careful development. She came to the end of it, and all was still confusion, and all useless, in spite of its adaptation to so many fine purposes:—

Non ragionam più, ma guardam e passa.

And may those in danger of the same waste of existence, for want of courage to meet its demands and defy its pains—and they are many—pause upon the slight sketch of this ineffectual character! Forbear to sigh, for sighs are weakness, but brace up the feeble knees, and endeavour to amend.

She died.

Her children shed many pious tears over the helpless form that lay before them, scarcely less helpless than it had actually been in life; but they were not of those to recall the errors and frailties of the sacred dead, for which the poor mute clay can no longer plead excuse or offer explanation.

They wept her tenderly, but the trace she had left in life was not deep. Things resumed their course in a few months, and the stream of time closed over her.

Mr. Wilmington shed a few tears, ordered a splendid funeral, put his servants into the very deepest mourning, lined his large, pompous pew with black, shut himself up for a few weeks, and then came out into the world, looking remarkably well in his mourning, which necessarily corrected his too showy taste in matters of dress, and was soon immersed in the round of those pleasures which in the great city attend upon wealth and liberty. Henry sighed, and returned to the counting-house, where at least one satisfaction awaited him: a gradually growing conviction that it was right he should be there.

Caroline was installed as the head of her father's establishment, which she soon began to manage with an intelligence, firmness, and attention to order and system hitherto little known there.

After the long reign of misrule, you will easily believe that it required a rare amount of activity, courage, and perseverance, to subdue ill-governed and insubordinate domestics to

obedience, and bring a boundless expenditure of money within the limits of a liberal and judicious economy. But girls of eighteen or nineteen, which was now Caroline's age, are often gifted with a native genius and capacity, and possessed of a spirit and energy, which enable them to produce astonishing effects; and Caroline was quite equal to her task. To be sure, the difficulty was very much diminished, and the effort rendered delightful, by her father's partiality. His esteem and admiration for his fine sensible girl was the best thing about him. He bore that from her which he would have borne from no other living being; for she was temperate and mild, though plain and sincere. He suffered the expenses of his household to be controlled; he turned a deaf ear to the complaints of his servants; he even accepted the resignation of that butler of whose skill in the direction of his table he had felt so vain; and he suffered Caroline to persuade him into a variety of wise and reasonable measures. Reason was so persuasive from her lips.

This affection was a great encouragement and a source of much happiness to her. Even his very weaknesses rendered Mr. Wilmington dear to his daughter. We naturally love those who suffer us to guide them to their good.

Caroline loved her father more dearly than she could possibly have loved such a character under any other relation of life: a character which, indeed, but for this relation, never could have interested her in the least.

Three or four years were spent in this manner: and thus this first part or preface to my story. And I must now beg you to suppose these three or four years over; and, if I have succeeded in the least degree in interesting you in the fate of a man I loved so dearly and esteemed so truly as I did Henry Wilmington, to accompany me through the remainder of his history.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

She was so expensive that the income of three dukes was not enough to supply her extravagance.—ARBUTHNOT.

IN a spacious and very splendidly-furnished drawing-room two ladies were sitting together.

The scene was in itself a picture: such a picture, however, as any of those dwellings might present, which, belonging to, I may say, the almost innumerable possessors of great mercantile wealth, cover the face of our land. The chamber was so large and so lofty as to merit the old-fashioned but imposing name of saloon. It was beautifully proportioned, and was terminated at one end by a fine oriel window of magnificent dimensions, which opened upon a richly-trellised balcony, now hung and festooned with creeping plants: the large purple and the lovely white clematises, honeysuckles, fragrant and of various hues, and lovely trailing roses, pink, crimson, yellow, white; all mingling delightfully together, and forming a charming arch of flowers and verdure over the rare and costly exotics with which the balcony was filled.

Beyond this beautiful trellis-work the eye fell upon a beautiful garden, enclosed by fine shrubberies, cultivated and growing in the finest luxuriance: the well-known plants, long the ornaments of our gardens, being mingled most pleasingly with many scarcely acclimated strangers; the delicate, feathery pines, the dark and almost sublime araucarias, the sweetly-tinted berberris, and others of those delightful new-comers, to the list of which every year seems to add some new treasure.

The lawn sloped from the windows to the river. The Thames flowed at its feet, with that rapidity which gives such an agreeable promise of healthy and changing airs, whilst the almost crystal waters ripple forward, and bathe the base of this gently-falling bank of close and emerald grass, seeming like velvet to the eye and foot. Upon its borders a few noble and ancient willows of immense size

were growing, waving their light tresses in the breeze, and seeming to bend and kiss the shining waters. Nearer the house the lawn was disposed in flower-beds, completely filled with flowers; beautiful, rich, gorgeous.

The day was extremely warm, but perfectly dry; and as the breeze came softly playing from the river, it lifted the tendrils of the woodbine and the pendent roses, and wafted softly up and down the light folds of the embroidered muslin curtains, which fell in ample folds from the cornice above, and softened the effect of the splendid brocatelle of which the more attractive curtains were composed.

Nothing could be more perfectly beautiful, more in harmony with all that the most lively imagination or the most delicate taste could demand, than the scene without. The scene within was perhaps less in harmony with such demands. And yet it was impossible not to admire.

Nothing could well be imagined more rich, more perfect in design, more charming in disposition of colours, than the furnishing of this apartment. The deep tone of the brocatelle, by its subdued warmth, kept down in some degree the profusion of ornamental furniture and of gilding and colouring which surrounded you; for the variety of chairs, sofas, causeuses, footstools, was countless; so were the tables, of rich, inlaid woods, and of rare beauty of design: the consoles and étagères covered with all sorts of expensive things; old china, old jewels, morsels of rare, curious Venice glass, and vases filled with beautiful flowers. The walls were hung with very tolerable pictures; whilst vast mirrors, depending from the ceiling to the floor, seemed to multiply interminably all these fine things.

It was afternoon, and the declining sun penetrated beneath the green arches of the trellis-work, and glistened upon what was one of the most splendid objects in the room, namely, a very fine girandole, which hung from the centre, and whose long, graceful chains, shimmering like dew-drops, glittered in the bright beams of an unclouded July day.

In this saloon, then, two ladies were sitting: one with whom you have commenced an acquaintance, the other whom I have not had the pleasure of presenting before. The younger lady was, as you know, tall and well formed, and her figure, now fully developed and most finely formed, had something of the serious majesty about it which we associate with our idea of the young Minerva. She was a noble creature, and there was something remarkably pleasing in the simple ease and dignity with which she stood or moved. Her fair arms were of the finest proportion; her

throat, rising like that noble tower celebrated by King Solomon, at once testifying dignity and grace, supported a head of the finest contour, round which an abundance of locks, of so dark a brown as almost approached to black, was drawn with a sort of classical plainness, and confined in a large low knot behind.

The face, however, was not, and never had been, what would be called beautiful. Many people would not admit that it was even handsome; the features were not of that peculiar delicacy of outline which, in my opinion, very often enfeebles the expression: the lines were decisively drawn; *pronounced*, as the French would say; but the eyes, large, dark, and lustrous, were most beautifully formed, and the dark, short, well-fitted eyelash spoke of health and strength, as did the clear, well-defined line of the black, almost horizontal eyebrow. The mouth was firm, but sweet; the skin a clear, unblemished olive; the countenance and expression calm, simple, and truthful.

Such was Caroline Wilmington, now in the full bloom of womanhood, as there she sat (for she did not look like one to lounge in a fauteuil or recline upon a sofa), before a table inlaid with some of the rare crimson and dark-brown woods of Sierra Leone, and at this moment covered with various cases of jewels, which now lay open, disclosing their glittering contents before her.

The other figure is the one that you have not yet been introduced to. It formed a striking contrast to that of the fine young creature I have endeavoured to describe. This was that of a small elderly lady, another of my darling old women; fat, and all huddled together; not set out and squeezed in by the magic corsets of Gosselin, as belles of sixty-five or seventy ought to be, but a sort of confused heap, as if the skeleton of the machine had given way, and all had tumbled together. She was clothed in an unintelligible mass of black modes, nets, laces, and ribands, relieved with small accompaniments of white, which white was whiter than the driven snow; and this gave a very picturesque, if not a very modish appearance to the little pyramid, which was surmounted by a small, withered face, with oddly-cut features and lively, quick eyes, beaming with a mingled expression of shrewdness and good humour.

The old lady did not at this moment, however, look particularly well pleased, as she was saying—

"I really wonder at you, niece!"

The old lady, I should have told you, was Mrs. Vernon, Mr. Wilmington's late wife's sister.

"And I really do wonder at you, niece!"

"And why should you, dear aunt?" said Caroline, lifting up her head from a splendid chain of emeralds which she was examining as it lay nestling in its bed of white velvet before her. "Why should you wonder at me, dear aunt?"

"You! to be so occupied with these gewgaws!"

"Dear aunt, I am only anxious to choose what will be most handsome and most acceptable, where I very sincerely desire to render myself acceptable; the most pleasing where I very much desire to please," said the young lady.

"I wonder you are anxious about it. For my part, I don't think it is your business to please in this case. I hope you will be pleased, that is all. I am sure it is more than I am, or ever shall be. . . And then, encouraging all this taste for ostentation and extravagance! If you must make a present, I think you might hit upon something more useful."

The young lady seemed to feel as if there were some justice in this remark. She mused a little while, with her eyes fixed upon the jewels; then she sighed slightly, and said, as if to herself, "Too true!

"And yet, dear aunt," she went on, "how could I find anything useful? If I knew the thing Lizzy would really want, would it not be my part to remind my father of it? In this case, a gift of that kind from me would be no gift at all. If I want to give a keepsake, it must be of something which, but for me, would not have been had; and it must be something 'rich and rare,' to show my wish to be acceptable: to show respect, dear aunt, which must be the most acceptable homage I can in this case offer. Then it must be something that will please, that she may be pleased with the donor; and, in short, dear aunt, I have but a poor invention, and I could hit upon nothing but some jewels that would answer to my idea of what was best for this occasion."

"It is a very great waste of money; that is all I have to say," persisted Mrs. Vernon; "and in my opinion it is a very wrong thing to scatter money away. As for Miss Emerson—Lizzy, as you please to call her—your father has taken care to buy her necklaces enough, without your adding to the number. I always considered one handsome necklace enough for any woman, be her condition what it might. My mother——"

"Times and fashions alter, dear aunt, you know; and wants and wishes with them," said Caroline, gently.

"So much the worse; so much the worse: they don't alter for the better, that I see. All this spending, and frippery, and finery, and nonsense! Oh, niece, niece! it was better

done in my day. City families were content to live in the City, where their fortunes were made. Finsbury Square was good enough for them; and now, Portland Place itself won't do; and your father must purchase that splendid palace, for I can scarcely call it house, in Belgrave Square; all to please this fine young lady, I suppose, that is coming among us. Well, those may like her who can: I never shall."

"Indeed, but I hope that you, and all of us, will have reason to like her. She is good-humoured and obliging, gentle and gay——"

"Extravagant, whimsical, vain, and empty," added Mrs. Vernon. "Oh, Caroline! and will you welcome such a one in your mother's place?"

Caroline's colour rose, and her heart beat for a moment rapidly.

"My mother! Oh, aunt! was it not my mother who taught me to endeavour not to sacrifice the present to the past, be that past ever so sacred? to love mercy better than sacrifice? not to sacrifice that precious thing, the happiness of another, to our own feelings, however pious or tender? My father, by the law of God and man, possesses the right to choose again. He thinks he consults his happiness in doing so; and when doing so, he has not shown himself indifferent to my brother's and my happiness. You know how handsomely, how generously he has behaved to us. He brings no tyrant into his house to infringe upon our household liberty; he has chosen a young creature, with whom it will be our own faults if we do not live at peace. He places her at the head of his family. She is my father's wife; as such I will respect and hope to love her. My mother, in my place, would, I fondly believe, have acted as I shall endeavour to do. If conscious still to the affairs of this world, I believe she approves my intentions. I honour her best by endeavouring to form myself by her precepts. Oh, mother! best beloved——"

And here a few tears stole down Caroline's cheek. She wept without any convulsion of the features; the large tears rolled calmly and stilly from her dark eyes. She wept as women of tempered fortitude weep.

Mrs. Vernon was a very excellent woman, in that form of excellence which was the result of the strict but somewhat narrow education of many years ago. She thought justly, but she judged rigidly. She was ready to make every personal sacrifice to duty herself, but she was too fond to impose her own notions of duty upon others. She was sympathetic and kind where she understood the sentiment before her, but she

was cold, and almost pitiless, to sorrow of which she could not appreciate the cause; and what she could not understand was sure to appear to her unreasonable. She was enthusiastic in her love of the excellence she comprehended; but some of the finer forms of excellence she did not comprehend. Then she had not a shadow of indulgence for the frailties of our nature. Everything took a positive form with her, for good or for bad. She had not breadth of understanding sufficient to take in the whole of a matter, and strike the balance of equity between contending qualities.

Caroline, as you already know, was of a totally different cast of character: her understanding, originally so strong and clear, was now greatly improved and enlarged by self-cultivation; her high, generous nature could take a widely-extended view of things; and the indulgence and candour of her temper softened in the most beautiful manner the clear, decided views taken by this fine young creature.

She had read and thought much for her sex, it might be said deeply; and she had come to her own conclusions and arrived at very strong convictions upon most subjects. But this never interfered with her indulgent judgment of others; she respected in them the freedom which she exercised herself. In religion more especially this precious quality of candour was most especially to be observed. Her own views upon this most momentous subject were deeply earnest, and her convictions of the truth of such views strong; yet she held in the highest reverence the sincere convictions of others. Perhaps never were the Christian virtues of vital persuasion on the one hand, and respect for Christian sincerity of opinion on the other, united in a more beautiful manner. She respected in others that thirst after truth which had resulted in such deep persuasions as regarded herself.

I have been rather particular in detailing the mainspring of this young lady's character, this love and reverence for sincerity and truth, that strong sense of vital religion which thence had arisen; for, this once well understood, the rest followed of course: affections calm though strong, earnest persuasions, temperate judgments, devotion to right, and a tranquil indifference to the glare and bustle of that life by which she was surrounded.

But the necklace is still in her hand; the door opens, and Mr. Wilmington enters the room.

He is looking younger and handsomer than ever; his tall, slight, elegant figure is set off by dress even more than usually gay; his brown hair is arranged as might become a

man of five-and-twenty, and which, but for certain fine lines about the mouth and brow, he really might pass himself off to be. For the rest, he looked much as when we left him last, and that is, anything but an indisputable gentleman: a certain French look, a count look, a flashy look: they are more unpleasing than ever. Now he was in high spirits, and acting the part of young lover and *quondam* bridegroom. His hands just at present are filled, however, with papers and letters, and he seems very much pressed for time.

"How do, Caroline? Ha! Mrs. Vernon, how do? Fine morning. Caroline, here are letters you must write to your brother for me. This cursed business in Wales! Tell him I wish he would arrange all that as fast as he can, and come home. I want him deucedly, tell him: he will understand. Do it by this day's post. That's my good girl."

"I will write immediately."

"No, not immediately. The phaëton is at the door, and I will drive you to Templeton this fine morning. I want to show Lizzy her new phaëton; I am sure she will like it. Houlditch has surpassed himself; you never saw a turn-out in such capital style in your life. Come, on with your bonnet; we have no time to lose. There! let me put all these things into your desk; I shan't go into the City to-day. Ha! what have we got here?"

"Do you like it?" said Caroline, displaying her necklace.

"Very handsome, upon my honour! Grays? Excellent taste; what I call really handsome. Emeralds, of course?"

"Yes. I am glad you like it."

"Have you bought it, you extravagant baggage?"

"I thought Miss Emerson would like it."

"Is it for her? Dear Caroline!" and he stooped and kissed her cheek, and patted it with much kindness; "dear, good girl! you could not have given me greater pleasure."

Caroline looked gratified. Mrs. Vernon folded her black mode cloak round her.

"Good-bye, Caroline."

"Don't go away so soon, dear aunt; we shall be back again in less than an hour. It is but a step to Templeton. Won't you stay dinner? Do, dear aunt; I have the flower-garden to show you, the new bed of verbenas. You must have one like it; it is beautiful. Here is the last new novel. Put yourself in the corner of the sofa. Here is your foot-stool. Do stay."

"Caroline," said Mrs. Vernon, half angrily, "you would persuade one to anything."

But she suffered her niece to take off her bonnet and

cloak, and to ensconce her in her favourite place, where she sat upright; for to lean back was against her principles, and taking her book, she put on her spectacles.

It was truly a splendid afternoon, and as the wind lifted the muslin curtains which hung over the windows, a glorious prospect presented itself. The woody banks and hills of Surrey; the Thames winding silvery through; the shrubberies, temples, fountains, and conservatories of Mr. Wilmington's large gardens; the dashing fall of waters; the singing and chirping of birds; the soft whispering breeze; the sun glittering and glowing upon them all. It was truly charming.

Caroline rang for her bonnet and cloak, whilst Mr. Wilmington employed himself in opening and examining one of those formidable compositions, consisting of almost a quire of paper, neatly ruled and lined, and penned (I wish every one wrote as legibly), with—

"To a buhl cabinet, richly inlaid with gold, and mother-of-pearl handles, elegantly chased, antique mountings, &c.

"To —— yards rich gold and purple brocatelle damask for curtains, &c.

"To making the same.

"To —— yards rich imperial silk, figured, with embossed heading, &c. &c."

Till, turning the pages impatiently over, he came to the final sentence, "£5,999 18s. 11½d."

"Five thousand pounds!" muttered he; "what an unconscionable rascal! A deuced heavy bill! Here, Carry," folding it hastily up, and stuffing it into the drawer of her writing-table; "I'll look over the items some other time."

Caroline had not heard the amount of the bill thus easily disposed of. She was attending to Mrs. Vernon.

"I have been thinking," began Mr. Wilmington, after a few moments' reflection, "that, after all, the back bed-room in Belgrave Square will be the quietest and most convenient for us. But it is too small; as impossible to make oneself comfortable in such a nutshell as it is to endure the noise of the square. A large bow might be thrown out on the side to the leads. I don't wish to go to the expense of carrying it up all the way. I have an idea that it might be supported on pillars."

"That would darken the back dining-room," said Mrs. Vernon, rather gruffly.

"True. I suppose it must be carried up. I wish I had thought of this before we furnished; but it don't very much matter: the back dining-room will be enlarged and improved."

"I should think it was large enough already for any reasonable creature," observed the old lady in the same tone.

"My dear Mrs. Vernon," flying to her, "you cannot possibly judge of the necessities of these things;" with an insinuating smile. "You, dearest madam, endowed with so much philosophic contentment, and who can find nothing to wish in your delicious retirement, can form no idea, I assure you, of the requirements which weigh upon us poor labourers in the great world: the thousand obligations, the necessities entailed by convention. I declare, I often envy the gardener's boy, with his five shillings a-week, whistling at his work. He is rich, enviable, for he has enough; whilst we, with the innumerable claims upon us, the countless demands of our station and place! The mines of Golconda could scarcely makes us feel rich!"

"So it seems," said the unmollified old lady.

"But, my dear madam, you should consider all this in judging of us poor strugglers in the tide of fashion. You cannot, blest as you are in happy immunity from such things; it cannot enter into your head, your imagination."

"I don't want it to enter either into my head or my imagination, which, I suppose, is much the same thing. I have no taste for these habits of extravagant luxury, and am in no danger of acquiring them. I wish as much could be said for Caroline."

"For Caroline! Ha! ha! What! for my ascetic! my Caroline! my unjewelled Roman virgin? You know she is a reproof to me every day."

"I don't think she has been a reproof to-day; at least she seems to me to have quite entered into the spirit of the place and company."

"Do you mean about the emerald chain?" said he, with a voice of some emotion. "No, Mrs. Vernon, you do her injustice there. If it be her misfortune to have a father perhaps a little too fond of these things, do not blame my Caroline, that, at a moment like this, she studies to gratify *his* taste rather than her own."

"Well, well; I have done," said Mrs. Vernon, settling herself on the sofa, and opening her book.

The phaëton was announced, and the father and daughter

descended. It was a most elegant affair, and a pair of beautiful horses in it; two grooms, complete as grooms could be, mounted on horses, a perfect match to those in the carriage, were in attendance.

Mr. Wilmington took the reins; Caroline placed herself by his side. He was no bad whip, and away they drove.

At Templeton lived Miss Emerson, the bride-elect, with whom I have already made you in some degree acquainted. She was the daughter of a merchant, who lived in considerable wealth and comfort at this place, but who certainly could not vie in expenditure or display with Mr. Wilmington. She had been educated at the same school with Caroline and Flavia, and was well acquainted with them both. She was esteemed to be a highly accomplished person in the circle in which she moved; and certainly she played as well as a person without the least taste or feeling can play, danced only too well, painted flowers and butterflies, and dressed to perfection. She was in other respects like other empty, ill-educated, dressy girls; very good-humoured when she was pleased, very good-natured when it cost her nothing; neither envious nor jealous when she held the first place; and though she ran long bills, which she knew not how to pay, would not have wronged people in any other way. She was tall, slender, fair, with very handsome features, fine blue eyes, abundance of hair, and, in short, as nearly the double of Mr. Wilmington as could well be.

Mr. Wilmington, in spite of his years, was considered a great catch among the young ladies of her acquaintance, it would seem; and Miss Emerson was extremely well satisfied with her conquest.

The fair lady was at her piano-forte when the phaëton stopped at the door, the clear, brilliant vibrations of which were heard through the open window. She rose from her seat as Mr. Wilmington and his daughter entered the room, and running to her "dear friend, her sweet Caroline," embraced her with all the tenderness which stepmothers-elect are wont to show to their future bridegroom's children. Then, recovering herself with a sweet bashfulness, she favoured her lover with a half blushing, half tender salutation, and sat down upon the sofa, still holding her dear friend's hand in hers.

"Sweet Caroline! So good of you to come to see me, and in this scorching sun, too. So sweet and friendly! How did you come?"

"I drove her across in the phaëton which Houlditch has just sent in," said Mr. Wilmington; "I thought you might

perhaps like to see it. The colour seems to me a thought too light. Would you indulge me by casting an eye upon it? Your taste is so just."

"Did you order it to be a dark green?"

"Yes, it is our colour."

"And the arms? I hate a tawdry mantle like a horse-cloth."

"Then you will be pleased. The coat-of-arms is very neatly painted on the simple shield."

"Oh! that won't do at all; nothing but the crest. I assure you Lady Maria E—— called in her phaëton yesterday, and there was nothing on the panel but the crest. I believe it is considered quite vulgar to load a light affair like this with anything more than one's crest."

"Would you like it altered?"

"Oh! by no manner of means, as the thing is done. Pray, don't let me be the occasion of any trouble about it. I merely gave my opinion; the matter is quite a trifle."

"No trifle, if it is less pleasing to you."

"Oh! thank you; I own I like to have things in good taste; that is, as other people of taste have them; and I have a horror of finery," pressing to her lips a French embroidered handkerchief, trimmed with broad Valenciennes, of about 350 francs the yard; "have not you, Caroline?"

"I think carriages always look better plain," said the future step-daughter.

"But, Caroline, here is charming intelligence: Flavia comes to town, after all, this year. She is to be with the old duchess. Now, is not this odd? The duchess is an old fogie, we all know; scarcely ever goes out, and she has asked Flavia to come to her. I don't know what the poor little creature will do in that big house; she will be like a little avodevat in a parrot's cage, quite lost in that vast lumbering place; but I suppose the duchess may have designs. There is her grandson, Lord George; all his family are in Paris, you know; but he is in town: the Guards, you know. Oh! he is a dear wicked creature; he has been, they say," whispering, "such a sad rake, spent such loads of money; quite irresistible, everybody says: but such stories of his extravagance! I'll tell you all, some day. However, a match with the Welsh heiress would set all right."

"But I hope dear little Flavia won't marry Lord George if he is so horrid," said Caroline.

"Oh, quite dreadful!" still in an under tone; "but so divinely handsome! such a look! that look which I prefer to all others, that of a complete man of the world —— How-

ever, Flavia is certainly coming, and I shall be so glad to have her."

"And when she comes," said Mr. Wilmington, putting on his most insinuating smile, "that will prove, I hope, a favourable circumstance for me. I shall then urge my suit effectually for the fixing of the day that is to make me the happiest of men, I trust. When does she come?"

"The 10th of this month."

"Then the week after; say the 16th, Tuesday. May I call that the happiest day of my life?"

"Tiresome man! How teasing you horrid creatures are!"

Poor Caroline! this courting before her! her father's last sentence! But she had learned, as all who love peace, and are destined to live with those of less delicacy of feeling than themselves, must learn, to take no offence when none was intended, and to harden themselves against random blows in the dark; so she sat quietly whilst Miss Emerson hesitated and resisted, and Mr. Wilmington urged and flattered. At last her father rose to depart, having gained his point; and now hurried and anxious, lest the fine house he had taken in Belgrave Square should not be perfectly ready to receive the superfine young lady who was to be its mistress; and whilst he worried himself to death about it, Caroline leaned back in the carriage, feeling it more difficult to be reasonable than ever she had done in her life.

CHAPTER II.

Pray only that thy aching heart
From visions vain content to part,
Strong for Love's sake, its woe to hide,
May cheerful wait the Cross beside.—KEBLE.

THE house in Belgrave Square, thanks to the exertions of the different artists employed, was ready upon the 16th. Thanks also, it may be said, to the unwearied exertions of Mr. Wilmington. How much the patience of Caroline had been tried by consultations upon the various claims of lavender and crimson, azure blue and pearl—between white and gold, oak and gold, or gold alone—size of mirrors and claws of tables, it would try your patience to describe. The wearisome, endless fretting of the flesh that it proved to Mr. Wilmington; the burden all these weighty matters were to his feeble soul, I shall not attempt to say.

"Time and the hour run through the roughest day," and time and the hour bring us the 15th, and upon the 15th there sat Caroline in the large drawing-room in Belgrave Square, exhausted by wearisome exertions; sick of gilding, satin, and ormolu; refreshing herself by inhaling the fresh air which blew through a large conservatory, just filled with fresh and fragrant flowers.

Caroline had just been inspecting and directing the men who had arranged them, after having inspected and directed a thousand other matters; her dress disordered, her hair deranged from its usual neatness, her hands yet covered with the gloves soiled by her work; for even the rich and great cannot escape such labour altogether, when things are to be very fine. She looked heated, and she felt sick at heart, dissatisfied with herself and every one. All this hurry, this pomp, this ostentatious display, it was almost hateful to her.

Thus she sat, her head leaning against the conservatory door, when she was refreshed by the presence of one whom she loved with a tenderness more than common to the tender

relationship which united them: her beloved brother Henry entered.

Henry has not improved in appearance since we parted with him. Cares which do not properly belong to so early an age, an anxious attendance upon business, the life of the counting-house, which he, from the highest principles, as we know, had long since adopted, had increased the shyness and reserve of his manners, and added to the homeliness of his mien and features; yet, such as he was, Caroline loved him almost to adoration.

Some years younger than herself, from a child of a more sensitive and timid nature, we have seen that something of the tender protection of a mother had been added to a sister's fondness. Every year's experience had added to her high appreciation of his worth, and to her interest in his fate. She had long understood the sacrifice of happiness which had been made, in consequence of the vain and feeble character of the father; and with grief beheld the ravages made in the gay spirit which ought to belong to youth, by anxieties which ought never to have clouded them. The carelessness and extravagance of the father had gone on increasing since the death of his wife. He had attempted to assume the character of a young disengaged man of fashion, and spared neither pains nor expense in fitting out the outline, as he conceived, of it; whilst Henry, early conscious that everything depended upon his care, devoted himself to business, and laboured indefatigably, by his care and industry, to avert the consequences of his rashness and imprudence, and manage with prudence and success those innumerable speculations by which his father proposed to supply his insatiable demands for money.

But the task was as ungrateful and disheartening as it was wearisome; for Mr. Wilmington, though he invariably flew to his son for advice and assistance when any one of his rash speculations failed, and invariably relied upon his spirit and perseverance to disentangle him from its evil consequences, was as invariably deaf to every argument his son could urge at the outset to prevent his engaging in these wild schemes. Nothing could be more disheartening than such a situation. The labour of the Danaïdes was light to it.

Harry had the virtue to persevere; but his spirits sank under it, though his resolution was unflinching. This his sister saw, and well understood; she adored him with that holy adoration which is to be won, and won alone by moral excellence.

Harry loved Caroline as one of extreme sensibility, with

the consciousness of his own worth, and of the slight value attached to it by men in general, loves one who he feels understands and estimates him, and whose esteem and affection are the sweet and almost sole earthly recompense of his labours. This affection was still shared, however, by his friend. The mutual affection between him and Selwyn had ripened into a strong and permanent friendship; and, unsuspected by all but Caroline, his long despairing passion still in secret filled his heart.

He came in and sat down by Caroline, and his eyes were clouded by so tender a melancholy, his homely features filled with so gentle an expression, that his sister thought him more than beautiful as she looked at him.

"My dear Harry, how did you find him?"

"Very, very ill, poor fellow! His cough, he tells me, was incessant last night. He looks wretchedly. Madeira has done nothing for him."

"Poor Selwyn! How sad! And how grievous for poor Mr. Craiglethorpe. Has any one written to him?"

"My father wrote when Selwyn returned, to tell him frankly what he thought of him. He sent the letter overland. Mr. Craiglethorpe must have received it by this time, and I doubt not will return if he can. Too late! Selwyn will never live to see him."

"I am very sorry for you all."

"And for yourself, Caroline?"

"I grieve, grieve deeply, that you should lose such a friend, Harry."

"And nothing more?" sitting down by her and taking her hand. "Nothing more?"

"I don't know how it happens, Harry, but I believe I am grown old before my time."

"Well, my dear," with a sigh, "as things turn out, perhaps it is better. I am very absurd to wish; and yet, poor dear fellow, I think he would die happier if he could flatter himself —— But it is better as it is."

"Indeed, indeed it is, dear Harry! I own to you, for, dear brother, you have all my confidence. I sometimes wish I were less insensible myself; but I do not well know why all the spring of youth and hope seems withered within me. I appear to go on quietly, and not unhappily; for I do not seem ever to imagine happiness. I do not imagine there is such a thing as great happiness to be found in this world. I am too rational, I sometimes think," and she sighed. "But Harry," recovering herself, "I hope you will be less rational than I am, that I may dote upon your wife and children."

He started as if something had pricked him sharply. He turned his head away.

"My wife and children! No, no; never, never!" Then, looking at her again with his sweet, melancholy eyes, "Dear Carry, we will live for one another."

The entrance of a servant interrupted the conversation. It was, upon his exit, renewed in a somewhat different tone.

"You have completed your preparations, I see."

"Yes, and you see how weary I am; but I believe everything is right at last. I confess I should be sorry to spend many such days as this day; but I think every order has been given. The breakfast—for my father thinks we must have a breakfast here previous to going to church—has been set out in the dining-room; and Gunter has done it very well." And she sighed again.

Poor Caroline! every sentence this evening ends with a sigh; she felt much depressed.

"A breakfast at the bridegroom's house! that seems contrary to the usual custom, and unnecessary."

"My father likes to have it so. He wishes his friends to assemble here first; I would not contradict him."

A short silence. Then Henry began—

"These rooms are really splendid," he said, looking round. "I am not very much given to observing this sort of things, but really these pink and crimson curtains, these mirrors, these pictures; altogether it has a magnificent effect: my father has certainly a great deal of taste in these things; everything so completely and handsomely done."

"It makes our poor, dear aunt very angry."

"Perhaps she is scarcely right there. I cannot quite make up my mind upon the subject; it is after all relative; to spend is a sort of duty." He never could bear to hear his father blamed by others.

"I believe she has a notion that great luxury, however large a man's fortune may be, is in itself rather wrong. She has a vague idea, for you know she is no great analyser of her ideas, that it has a positively corrupting effect upon the heart. I cannot help thinking myself that there is a foundation of truth in what she says."

"I do not know whether luxury corrupts, but I think it enfeebles; and I feel sure that it embarrasses the mind. I inherit, I suppose, the inclination from my mother, who had such an innate love of simplicity; but luxury is not pleasant to me: it seems so to increase the luggage of life as to impede the march. When you and I live together, Caroline, we shall not want all these things—shall we?"

"No."

"We will have almost a cottage, and your books; and a John and a Mary. But here comes my father."

Enter Mr. Wilmington, looking vexed and hurried, and his fine hair in disorder, his colour heightened, a mixture of embarrassment and anger on his face.

"Henry! Is Henry here? Oh, Henry! upon my soul, the impudence of these fellows! Caroline, did you leave the bill-drawer at Roehampton?"

"Yes; I did not think we would require it till we went back. I can get anything you want to-morrow morning."

"Do go down-stairs; there's a good girl. Burton wants to speak to me; see what it's all about. No use plaguing her about these things," following her and shutting the door. "You see, Henry, this is really a very disagreeable business. Here's Formby asking for his money—seven thousand pounds, or to that tune—for furniture sent in these last two years. Now, really, I am afraid just at this moment we shan't find that sum to our credit at Kinglake's."

Henry looked surprised.

"I understood you, sir, that all the bills had been paid last Christmas."

"All but a few trifling ones, Hal. When you and I made up our budget for the year, I got together enough to liquidate all, as I thought; but these cursed upholsterers' bills do mount up so confoundedly! Will you—there's a good lad—he must be paid—go down into the City as soon as I am off to-morrow and sell my fifty T and T shares? they will more than do it, at two hundred and twenty. Stay, lend me a scrap of paper. Six thousand pounds! Plague on it! Well, take the Grand Junction; take enough, that's all; and just step down and tell the fellow he shall have his money to-morrow, and bid him never expect to do a job in this house again as long as he lives: an impudent scoundrel!"

Harry looked grave. Mr. Wilmington whistled, went to the window, and employed himself in arranging the folds of one of his rich silk curtains. Then—

"Well; how's poor Selwyn?"

"Worse, sir, I am afraid."

"Poor fellow! d—d unlucky! Would have been a pretty match for Caroline. Poor old Craigie! it will go nigh to break his heart!"

Henry was looking over some papers which Mr. Wilmington had thrown upon the table.

"Hamlet's, sir, I see."

"Ay, ay, ay," stammering a little: "only a few wedding

presents for Lizzy. She's a little too fond, perhaps, of these things. The last time; for once in a way. I shall not think of looking at that account till Christmas two years. These d—d fellows, with their consummate exorbitant charges, may wait two years for their money, in all conscience."

"Anderson, sir."

"What the deuce! are all the fellows bewitched? Hewson put all these into my hands as I came up stairs."

"Five hundred guineas for the bays. Really, my dear father, excuse me, but I do wish I might see a little after your bargains in horse-flesh."

"And why, in the name of goodness? *you* of all people! I should think I am at least as good a judge of a horse as you, Master Harry. What should you know about it—with two sober tits, one for yourself and one for your servant, and as ordinary a thing as ever I looked on for your cab? But you lads are so conceited! I assure you the horses are well worth the money."

"Well, sir, but how do you propose to pay all these demands?"

"Propose! nonsense! mere trifles to a man of my fortune! I'll tell you what, Harry, if you don't take care, you will grow monstrously like a curmudgeon. Pay! pay! pay! I suppose there's enough, if I chose to fork it out, to pay a hundred such rascally tradesmen."

Harry was again silent. Soon afterwards Caroline re-appeared, upon which he folded up the papers quietly, put them into his pocket, and left the room.

Mr. Wilmington remained busied in examining every detail of his fine apartments: touching chairs, looking at china, and again giving the last finish to the folds of his ample window-curtains; then, stepping up to his daughter, with a countenance from which every shade of anxiety had disappeared—

"Really, Caroline, take it all together, I think it's the completest thing in London. But now let us sit down and arrange the programme for to-morrow. Stay, lend me your pencil. *My* friends and *your* friends assemble here a little before nine o'clock. A standing breakfast is arranged for them in the dining-room; a little gossiping, and all that: one must stand a little raillery, you know, upon such occasions;" with a smile of gratified vanity as he glanced at the reflection of his fine person and features in a mirror which hung from ceiling to floor just opposite. "One cannot help it if one does look a little too young!" passing his hand through his fine brown hair, in which not one silver thread

was discernible. "I don't how it is, old Time seems to have forgotten me, egad! But he'll make me pay double scores at one of his *times*, I suppose. Heigho! Well, as I was saying, then to church. My carriage—you will go with me in my carriage, dear Caroline—I know you will!" with a feeling in his tone which he never was known to exhibit except when he addressed his daughter, "you will go in my carriage with me, dear girl—won't you?"

"Indeed I will."

"Thank you. Then comes Jones's carriage. He'll bring Henry, with those two strapping daughters of his, gladly enough, I'll be bound. Jones, though he makes such a parade of his *substance*, an ostentatious old prig! Jones will be glad enough to take Henry in that substantial brown barouche of his, looking, for all the world, like the coach of a City knight in Whittington's days; a City knight worth a plum! Ha! ha! a century ago! That ponderous old waggon, all chocolate-colour and gilding. He'll be glad enough to take Harry, I say. Poor Hal! he'll be rather of the substantial himself in a year or two, I fear, and that's a pity. Moreover, I don't think he takes to Miss Eliza Jones. Heigho! Well, after Jones has lumbered off, comes Estcourt. A very different sort of gentleman; fine as a fox and sharp as a needle, and close as a miser's strong-box. He'll be in his neat chariot; he likes things neat and plain, detests ostentation—glancing at me, perhaps. Poor wretch! always hesitating between fear of spending and ambition to spend. Ay, Caroline, is that him?"

"Indeed, sir, you are a little hard upon your own friends."

"Friends! Hang them! I wonder where they would be now if I had never been their friend. However, let that pass. Who comes next? Oh, your worthy aunt! Bless my soul! I had nearly forgotten her; we must bring her in before Jones, in her queer, old-fashioned tub; but Jones won't relish that; he likes to take the lead as well as any of us."

"My aunt! I believe, my dear father, she does not mean to be there."

"Nay, nay; she won't refuse me her company to church; it would be unkind. It would look so unkind: besides, what would people say? Stse! tse! so late!" looking at his watch; "too late to send and do anything. Why did you not tell me this before? Did she really say she would not come?"

"I was so certain, my dear sir, that she would not yield to any persuasions, that I thought it better to spare you both the mutual pain of using or resisting them."

"She is an obstinate old woman, so full of her own bygone notions! never can yield an iota to the wishes or judgment of anybody. Always was, and always will be the same, to the end of the chapter."

Caroline was silent.

"Why, isn't she? Doesn't she seem to take a pleasure in provoking me? No opinion of my judgment; will not yield in the minutest article to any of us."

"When shall I order coffee to be sent up?"

"When? at three quarters, two minutes, six seconds past eight, precisely. Not a drop—what o'clock? What can you be thinking of? Order coffee and chocolate to be brought up and handed round as people come in. It is to be a *standing* breakfast. Pray observe, Caroline, anything else would be grossly improper, under the circumstances; the breakfast is always given at the bride's father's house. I hope you clearly understand this, Caroline, and do take care to make my people understand it; a table laid out with fruit, cold meats, &c. &c.; what you please, but nothing hot—I wouldn't, for the world; chocolate, coffee, rolls, and bread and butter, handed round. I thought I had made this clearly understood; but really, unless I look to the minutest particulars myself, I can never depend upon things being as they should be. Good heavens! I would not have anything else, anything but a *standing* breakfast, for the world."

"I clearly understood you so, my dear sir; and so did Brandon and Hewson. Pray don't make yourself uneasy."

"Not make myself uneasy!" in a fretful tone; "that's easily said. It would make Job himself uneasy. Something is certain always to go wrong in my house. Would you believe it? we were within an ace of not having the new liveries! What do you say to that? The stupid fellow swears Brandon said for the 17th; Brandon swears, till he is black in the face, he said 16th. If he had taken the precaution of saying 15th. . . . In matters of importance, always be a day beforehand," he added, with grave earnestness: "it is one of the best pieces of advice I, as a parent, can give you."

CHAPTER III.

His friends were invited to come and make merry with him, and this was to be the wedding-feast.—L'Estrange.

Bright shone the sun upon the auspicious morning, glittering upon the array of freestone palaces in Belgrave Square, bathing with his early beams their lofty porticoes and windows wide and high, and their awful entrance-doors. The sound of carriages rattling at an unwonted hour is heard, and the cries of footmen and coachmen, added to the din of the many-headed multitude, assembled to enjoy the sight of magnificence, filled the air. A sweet summer morning it was; the trees in the centre garden waved green and refreshing to the breeze; the sparrows chirped merrily about; blue was the azure vault above. The eye of heaven looked serenely down upon this little corner of the bustling ant-hill; this gaudy, glittering crowd of tiny atomies, running to and fro in their gilded coaches: serene, still, sublimely and calmly beautiful: so, I might say, looked Caroline that morning, only that I will not dishonour her simplicity by terms that might seem affected or exaggerated. Her looks displayed that sole earthly beauty upon which we may believe the eye of heaven looks down with complacency: the beauty radiating from the pure, well-ruled spirit within, from a lofty soul and a true and constant heart.

She looked, however, very pale; and the fine features, round which her dark hair was braided, wore an air even more than usually still. Her eyes, so full of that deep expression which gives evidence both of thought and feeling, seemed now more deeply beautiful than ever, as she moved about among her guests with a tranquil gravity that was almost majestic. Yet Caroline thought nothing of all this; she was perfectly and entirely unaffected. Her demeanour this morning was but the simple effect of what had been going on within for the last few hours; of the earnest struggles against the pain which no child can help feeling upon such an occasion.

She had been struggling hard with herself to overcome this, and at least to obtain composure. When her father, in conformity with the privileges with which he was invested by the laws of God and man, was about to seek happiness in another choice, Caroline was not one to yield weakly to lamentations over the past, or as weakly and less innocently to bewail, far less blame, the means her father chose to adopt to repair his loss. To feel is human; candidly to consider, divine. Caroline could not help feeling many things acutely; but she struggled to be equitable and just.

Harry was already in the dining-room when she came down, where were present assembled Mr. Wilmington and a few gentlemen, all standing. Harry leaned against the back of a chair: he was dressed with much more attention than usual; and this, with a certain shade of sweet and tender melancholy upon his features, rendered his appearance more than commonly interesting—nay, almost elegant. He lifted up his eyes as his sister came in: one glance of sympathy; but they did not exchange a word.

Mr. Wilmington was laughing and chatting gaily: he was dressed in better taste than usual, and looked so young and handsome that he very well became the character in which he stood. His fine brown hair was brushed carelessly across his forehead, and carefully across the crown of his head. He was full of spirits, complacent and happy to a degree. He came up to his daughter with a gallant and winning smile, and presenting her to the gentlemen, of whom some were to her strangers, made a few light, and, as he thought, remarkably easy and happy speeches, which she received softly and kindly. She knew they were well meant, at least. Soon the bustle increased, and fresh carriages drove to the door.

And first in walked Mr. Jones, with his round, red, handsome face, his very substantial figure, his air of a very considerable man, in his very most courteous humour. He shakes Wilmington heartily by the hand: he has a jest, such as it is, and a kind patronising speech for everybody, even for Mr. Wilmington himself; for is not he a man of twice his wealth and weight in the City?

His daughter, Miss Jones, is upon his arm, most elaborately dressed, but she is plain, and, to tell the truth, very cross-looking. For, alas! poor Miss Jones had found that even her large portion had failed as yet to obtain her such a settlement as she liked in the world. Miss Lavinia followed, leaning upon the arm of a tall, whiskered youth, dressed in the very extreme of the mode, and belonging to some crack regiment or other. His coat was of the first cut, his figure

slender as a wasp, and his face vacant; for a sort of heedless, lively, good-natured impertinence natural to him had been effectively subdued into vacuity by military *hauteur*, and the cold reserve which he thought became his social position in a party such as this. He was, however, the pride and glory of his father, who called him "that graceless puppy," and indulged him in every way; and whom he, in return, called "governor," and slighted and looked down upon.

On this fine young gentleman's arm, as I said, hung his youngest sister, Miss Lavinia, who bent and swayed about like a willow wand, with her delicate veil and laces and feathers, and her profuse curls of fair hair hanging about her pretty blue eyes; and she minced, and laughed, and smiled, and chatted, and called the men, "Oh, you wild creature!" and said, "For shame!" and hid her face, but not her smiles, lest she should be called methodistical, which she hated.

And now, my dear reader, you have a slight sketch of what constitutes, in my opinion, the Branghtons of our day.

More carriages; and then Mr. Estcourt's plain, bachelor's carriage—his servants in plain liveries—his particularly plain set-out appeared.

Now, Mr. Estcourt was the man of all his acquaintance of whom Mr. Wilmington stood the most in awe. They had been intimate from their youth upwards—from almost boys; and had succeeded their fathers as partners in the same house. But Mr. Estcourt held himself above Mr. Wilmington, though his inferior in fortune and in the place he occupied in the firm; for he was a scion of a rather good family, and he piqued himself much thereon.

He condescended, it is true, to get money; and he was one of the hardest and most impassible of men in all transactions of business that ever closed his hand against the prayers of a sinking or struggling friend: he, however, despised the ostentation of that wealth which he so insatiably endeavoured to acquire. He had some natural good taste, and the bitterest, most inflexible pride I ever met with in man; therefore he detested the vulgar display of his two partners, and chose to spend his money so as rather to evince the elegance of his taste than the extent of his riches.

A small house, simply but expensively fitted up; a few choice pictures; a library, every volume in which was a rarity; a small but beautifully-appointed table—I should be ashamed to tell you what he gave his cook—such was his style of living.

All well enough, if this more refined taste had not served as a nourishment to his heartless, exclusive pride and self-

esteem, and to the contemptuous disdain with which he looked down upon others.

However, to proceed: there all the people stood, and chattered, and tossed off chocolate together, and got into their carriages again; Mr. Wilmington restless and disconcerted, having unluckily overheard an ironical commendation from Mr. Estcourt upon the unexpected hospitality of the day.

And now we are all standing in the chancel of St. George's, Hanover Square; are assembled once more, in this our fifty-ninth century, to celebrate that primeval institution of the Creator, which, by the simple obligation it exacts, spiritualises and elevates the relation, or should do so; for I am compelled to acknowledge that, in the instance before us—as, alas! in so many others—nothing could be less apparent than the spiritual and the divine: never were holiness, religion, and a pious sense of mutual and sacred obligations more completely out of the question than upon the occasion of the marriage before us, particularly as far as regarded the principals.

Miss Emerson, in a white satin dress, covered with Brussels lace, displaying to perfection the beauty of her tall and slender figure; her long, fair hair disposed in the most becoming manner—with a veil, and the indispensable orange and myrtle flowers; her long, swan-like neck modestly drooping; her embroidered handkerchief looking, as somebody says, like a tissue of woven air, in her hand; was, in spite of a few natural feelings that would intrude, chiefly intent upon going through the ceremony in the most agitated and interesting manner that could become a delicate female. Mr. Wilmington was still haunted by that sneering speech of Mr. Estcourt's: it rang in his ears in the most tormenting manner. Old Jones looked stupid, and Miss Jones cross; Miss Lavinia languishing, the captain fine, and Mr. Estcourt supercilious. Foolish admiration, or foolish fun, was in the faces of most part of the rest.

Of course I except Caroline and Harry, whom you know and feel for already, and two more; for behind Miss Emerson stood the old, kind duchess, who, as a distant connection, had been invited, and had very kindly attended. She is looking on, her venerable countenance filled with benignity; and she leans with one hand upon an ivory-headed staff, and the other rests upon the arm of Flavia.

Flavia has, since we last saw her, improved extremely in appearance; pretty and sweet she ever was, but now she is lovely beyond expression. Her countenance is so varying and so animated; when grave, so gentle and soft; when gay,

so playful and bewitching; and there is still a peculiar simplicity and originality of manner—in every way all that is most charming. Her features and figure I have already described, and that soft abundance of streaming hair; as for her eyes, I once heard it asked what was their colour: the colour of sunshine was the reply.

She looks grave now, and watches Lizzy with a serious look of interest; and the tears just moisten her sweet eyes. In her artless goodness of heart, she is thinking of the solemnity of the day: how awful, how imposing; the mutual pledge, the irrevocable vow; in this case especially, another's children concerned: what a responsibility!

Then her eyes wander towards Caroline; and she thinks of the mother that is gone, and she feels how at this moment to Caroline she must be sadly present. She fancies her pale ghost, in the vestments of the grave, gliding silently through the gaudy circle; and she starts, and looks round for Harry.

He is there, leaning against a pillar, his eyes bent to the ground, most mournful; but they are often mournful. Flavia's eyes rest here.

On a sudden, like the change of a scene in a theatre, it is over, and the company are crowding about the bride. They are going to the vestry, and then to the splendid breakfast which awaits them at the bride's father's house; and Caroline feels a little creature pressing against her, and the softest of hands is thrust into her own. She looks down, and two glistening sweet eyes meet hers, telling a tale of honest affection, tender sympathy, and fervent admiration.

Caroline felt as if balm were spread over her wounded heart. She pressed Flavia's hand tenderly.

They were standing thus together when Harry entered the vestry. A look, a dazzling before the eyes, deadly paleness for an instant; but no one observed it; and Harry recovered himself so as to come forward and speak as usual.

And now Lord George, who had been present also, came forward to tell Flavia that he thought the duchess seemed a good deal tired. Lord George is as handsome as ever, and looks the complete man of fashion and of the world: his manners are agreeable, his smile is insinuating, and his eyes, when they look upon Flavia, seem to beam with love and fondness. Harry's countenance again evidently underwent rapid changes as he approached; he felt sick, and retreated behind the crowd.

Flavia looked wistfully at Caroline.

"Caroline, I don't know, but promise me, if I ask a favour, you will refuse me if you do not quite like to grant it.

I never know how people may feel at such times. I may, perhaps, be only a bother, and in your way; but I should so like to spend this day with you."

Lord George looked very black.

"Have you forgotten the dinner at Richmond?"

"Oh, dear, no! but I don't want to go there at all; that is, if Caroline—if Miss Wilmington—will have me."

"My sweetest Flavia," said Caroline, looking down upon her with a fond, gratified smile; "my sweetest girl, what you ask is so kind in you, and will be so infinitely pleasant to me, that, as I suppose you have hundreds of dinners of that kind, if you will promise not to repent, I will accept gladly."

"Then I will run to the duchess, and settle it with her, and be back with you in a moment."

"Yes, my dear; I have one of my father's carriages at my disposal."

She hastened away, Lord George following, without uttering another word, looking, as people say, like a thunder-cloud.

"My dear madam—my dear grandmamma—I have a prodigious favour to ask of you."

"Which I hope 'my dear grandmamma' will refuse," said Lord George.

"Well, my dear, what is it? You seem in a vast hurry."

"Can you spare me to spend the day with Caroline Wilmington, dear grandmamma? You guess why. I need not tell you why I particularly wish to spend *this* day with her."

"I at least can guess why," said Lord George, gloomily.

"I need not say more. You always understand me at a word, dearest madam."

"I think I do in this case, at least, my love; and if Miss Wilmington be of my taste, your company will be particularly acceptable. Go, by all means; but have you not forgotten Richmond?"

"Oh, no!"

"I thought as much. Well, I must send your excuses by Lord George then."

"If you please, ma'am. Oh, how good you are! Shall I stay with you till your carriage draws up?"

"No, my love! return to your friend. I shall do perfectly well with this very sweet-tempered-looking cousin of yours," nodding to Lord George, "if he will place you under Miss Wilmington's wing, and then come back for me."

Lord George, preserving the most ungracious silence, conducted Flavia to her friend, and, having left her in what he styled delectable company, returned to the good duchess, put

her into her carriage, and jumping in after her himself, humming an air between his teeth or biting his lips in silent ill-humour, left the good grandmother to her own reflections during the way home.

I need say nothing of the breakfast. It was just like any other elaborate wedding-breakfast, which, when weddings are cordial, joyous things, produces a very agreeable little fuss and hurry before the last leave-taking comes off; but in this case, what with pompous ostentation upon one side, susceptible vanity upon others, and self-seeking upon all, it was as cold and uninteresting an affair as I ever found myself present at.

The bride and bridegroom—she still preserving her languishing air of bridal sensibility; he, when he was not thinking of himself, only thinking of her with reference to himself, and how this youth, beauty, and grace in his young wife ministered to his vanity—were supported on each side by the bride's father and her two brothers: all three fussy, affected, finely-dressed, vulgar men, in their several ways.

Toasts, however, were drunk, and speeches were made, and people began to expand in spirits a little under the influence of the good things; and talking and laughing, and eating and flirting, began on both sides of the table, as they ought to do.

Caroline, Harry, and Flavia sat together at the lower end; Flavia in gay spirits, showering, as I might almost say, her sunny, heart-winning smiles upon Harry, who, filled with his own desponding thoughts, turned away, almost unable to bear the feelings this sweet cordiality awakened. And when he did, she would turn and address herself to Caroline, and prattle away, her voice filled with affectionate kindness.

"Then, after this grand breakfast is over, we are to go out together to Roehampton?"

"If you have no objection, my love."

"I shall so enjoy it! sitting upon the soft green grass, under those delightful trees, chatting and laughing as we used to do."

"And Harry," said Caroline to him, "I hope you are coming out too. I hope this day, at least, you will make a holiday, Harry."

"I must go into the City, and I must visit Selwyn; and then I will follow you as soon as possible.

"Madness!" said he to himself in the agony of his feelings.

"Yet why not? What matters it?" as with a sort of desperate defiance of suffering, which overcame every consideration of prudence, he resolved to snatch at the dangerous delight of her society, whatever the after cost. The daily unhappiness of his life had produced in this naturally temperate nature a sort of restless indifference as to a future, which he felt, with but too much certainty, held out no promise of bliss for him.

But little did his countenance express these feelings: there was nothing observable but a nervous, anxious hurry, as he calculated the time it would take to hasten to the City, glance in at Selwyn, and fly to Roehampton, so as not to lose one moment of this but too delightful day.

He thought the breakfast would never come to an end; for sweet as was her presence there, what was that to the bliss of being alone with her and Caroline, on such a day, and amid the shades of the shrubberies at Roehampton?

At last the company rose from table, and Lizzy went to change her dress, and to return, and with tears just trembling in her beautiful eyes, to cast herself into her father's and mother's arms, and to be torn away and hurried by her tender bridegroom to her carriage.

And so farewell, and *bon voyage*.

Then the company dispersed; and Caroline and Flavia entered Mr. Wilmington's britschka, and were soon whirled away to Roehampton; and Harry opened the door of Selwyn's room. A short, sharp, hard cough was heard.

Selwyn was sitting upon a sofa, with a table covered with books before him; books being tossed upon the sofa and floor around. A waiter stood upon the table, with a small basin of half-consumed broth, and the untasted parallelograms of dry toast tossed here and there. Upon the other side of the table was another waiter, with a phial of physic, a teaspoon, and a teacup. The room was airy and handsomely furnished, but littered from one end to the other: boots, slippers, hats, canes, newspapers, caricatures, letters, all in most admired, or rather most sad confusion. There was no female hand—no mother, sister, wife—to dispute order and comfort in his sick room. Sick at heart and weary of spirit, the master, with languid hand, it was plain, flung everything away from him as he had done with it, and he had not energy

enough left to arrange, or even to order others to arrange, the melancholy confusion. Mr. Selwyn possessed a large fortune (what was that here?), but he had not a female relation in the world. Sickness is a great leveller; in one respect, this rich man's case was one of miserable destitution.

He was lying in his dressing-gown, his coat hanging near him upon a chair, as if his servant had brought it in, and he had felt too languid to encumber himself with it. Classical books, and books of German and English philosophy, were lying around him, but his finger was on the pages of a trashy novel. He threw it aside with a look of weariness and disgust, and a bright crimson flashed to his cheek as his friend entered.

"Oh! there you are, Harry. I am right glad to see you at last. Well, it's all over, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes!" and throwing himself into a chair, crossing his arms upon the table, buried his face upon them. Selwyn respected a first moment of emotion; but as the chest of his friend began to heave with unwonted passion, and as tears were evidently running from his eyes, whilst he almost groaned aloud, surprise succeeded to sympathy, and Selwyn expostulated.

"But, my dear Harry! this is really a weakness: an unpleasant day, certainly; but really——"

"Fool and madman!" cried Henry, rising impatiently and dashing the tears from his eyes. "My dear Selywn, forgive me! I was quite overcome; but it is over now. How are you?"

"Nay; how are *you*, Henry?"

"Oh! don't think of me, my dear fellow! Will you come out to Roehampton to-day? The air will do you good. My sister is there, and her friend, Miss L——. It is a delicious day; do come! Let us be happy, Albert, *once* in this world; let us heap upon one day a pressure of happiness such as this world rarely offers. Alas! that it must be delusive as it is sweet! And then——"

"Yes; and then let me pursue the dark, dreary road that is leading me downwards to the grave. You are right, Henry. Yes, I will come! Order my carriage, will you? I am past cabs. This delightful day will put life into me."

The ancients mingled the image of death with the roses of their festivals. They seemed to take a voluptuous pleasure in associating the melancholy remembrance of the grave with all that was rich and rapturous in their bright sense of existence. The dark grave is ever before them; the cold shadow passes over their jewelled cups, and breathes upon their

flowery wreaths: it mingles with their gayest carouses, and rests upon their beds of purple and gold.

So it seemed to be with these two young men: both struck to the heart; one in the spring of hope, the other of life; one feeling that existence lay like a desert before him; the other, that he soon must die: to seize upon the cup of joy that momentarily presented, crown it, and drain it in one rich draught, and then ——! Such was the feeling of both.

"Yes, I will spend one last summer day with Caroline," thought Albert.

"Yes; I will yield myself to the dangerous enjoyment of her smiles," muttered Henry.

"What's that, Henry?"

"Oh, Albert! ask me nothing. I love her; I adore her; and for ever in vain!"

"Poor fellow!"

A pause. Henry was the first to break it.

"I had forgotten," said he, hastily. "I have business for my father; I must go into the City. Will you wait for me?"

Alas! poor Henry! Even in this state of excited feeling, he had to plunge into all the worry of business; to thread the dark streets which lead to the temple of Mammon; to drive smiles, and roses, and love, and sunbeams out of his head; and to talk with busy clerks in close, dingy rooms filled with desks, and, more dingy still, papers covered with the long array of figures and invoices. He must discard all the sweet dreams of fancy, and think only of realities—stunning, perplexing realities; for, in spite of his father's great wealth, the immediate necessity for paying those bills was truly embarrassing.

No sooner was he seated, pen in hand, to calculate the value of shares and stocks, than he found the provision for the needful fall far short of the demands. These he found pouring in on all sides, and far exceeding what his careless and improvident father had prepared him to expect. To satisfy these numerous claimants, he felt, would be extremely difficult without submitting to very great sacrifices; and already he began to sicken at the thought of the vast waste of property occasioned by this senseless profusion.

Harassed, vexed, disappointed, wearied in spirit, and depressed by that painful sense of pecuniary difficulty which for the first time came over him, he mounted his horse. All the wild enthusiasm of the morning sobered down to the serious anxieties of the hour. But it was this, in truth, which gave their depth and force to Henry's feelings. It was that

they arose not from the mere effervescence of an idle fancy, which had nothing to do with life but to dally with it, and to deck it and cover its hollowness with roses, and silks, and gildings. Steep a man in cold, bitter realities; harden him by contact with the labouring, striving, calculating world of monied business; chasten him by crushing his most delicate tastes, by disgusting his most tender fancies; force him into the struggle with grasping, vulgar human life; and then change the scene, and lead him to the bowers of sweetness, grace, and tenderness, and let what is to him as an angel's presence gild the enchanting picture; and then tell me whether that man will not feel it.

But there is something even more than this. Love is a passion which, to be deep and lasting, requires a certain substantiality, if I may say so; a seriousness in it. Few men, not engaged in the current pursuit of important objects, acquire that depth and firmness of character which is necessary to the existence of a strong enduring passion. I have my doubts whether the pretty fellows who have nothing better to do than to make love can form any idea of what the genuine sentiment is.

Harry, calmed and sobered, arrived at his friend's door; the excitement of the morning subdued, and all its bright visions tempered down; but was the image which was peace, and love, and joy to him less vivid, or less dearly cherished in his heart of hearts? Ah, no!

Albert, faint and sick (for the warmth of the sun which diffused cheerfulness upon all around seemed only to excite a sort of feverish, irritating sense of heat in him), leaned languidly against the cushions of his britschka. Henry sat opposite, and marked with sorrow the sharpening features, the evening brightness of the eye, the flickering hectic colour on his cheek. The spirits of the sick man had already fallen, and the picture of delight had faded away. A load pressed upon his bosom; iron fetters hampered, as it were, his limbs; the very light became painful, nay, loathsome to his eyes. By the time he reached Roehampton, to lie down upon a sofa, to close his eyelids, to sink into the melancholy solitude of extreme sickness—solitude even in the very midst of those we love best, "free among the dead, like unto them which go down unto the grave"—was all that poor Selwyn could do.

Harry, perceiving how faint he was, and already repenting that he had persuaded him to come out, laid him upon the sofa. Caroline spread the cushions for him, and spoke to him with a tenderness and kindness that soothed even the

bitterness of that bitter hour, whilst Flavia stood by watching them in silence, her eyes swimming with tender pity, and her looks, as Henry turned towards her, filled with compassion and goodness.

And yet it was, after all, a sweet day: not enrapturing and intoxicating, as the two friends had imagined to themselves, but tender, holy, and still. Albert dozed upon the sofa in that beautiful drawing-room; Caroline sat by him with her work in her hand; Flavia by her side, pretending too to work; Henry leaning over the back of the sofa looking at them; a few words dropping from time to time in that low voice which seems to give an air of peculiar intimacy and confidence to the conversation. There was happiness in the mere feeling of being all together. Flavia very often addressed Henry, and looked at him with something of the same sort of interest as that with which Caroline regarded the sufferer upon the sofa.

"I am sure," said she, "that you have been jading yourself in that tiresome City again, Henry; just as you used to do last year, when you would come home so hot and good for nothing." And then she thought, as she had often done before, with mingled pity and indignation, upon the father's thoughtless levity, which allowed the son, in the flower of his youth, to be buried in these wearisome cares and occupations.

And as she thus thought, her countenance, true to that good and sensible heart, beamed upon him with more than usual sweetness, and her voice was modulated to a harmony softer than ever, when she addressed him; and she very often did address him, for she was accustomed to treat him with a sort of playful, sisterly familiarity.

And thus this charming summer afternoon was idled away. Albert could not go down to dinner, so they agreed not to leave him, but to go by turns; and Henry and Flavia went down first, for Albert had whispered, "Caroline, stay with me!" He coughed that sharp, short cough which went to her heart.

"Are they gone? Caroline, you do not—you cannot love me; yet give me your hand."

She gave it him.

"I am glad I must die, Caroline, since so it is; for as one loves a dying man, you can and you do love me now."

"Indeed, Albert, I have the most sincere and perfect friendship and affection for you. Do not let us talk of either mournful or foolish things."

"If you had been my wife, Caroline, I might have died

holding your hand as I do now; but things go hard with me; health, youth, love—the common universal blessings—all denied," said he, with a shade of bitterness; "and yet, strange mystery of sickness! to lay my hand upon this pillow, and be quiet, is almost all I desire: *rest*, might this hand have only been mine!"

And he pressed it, then closed his eyes, and lay holding it; he would willingly so have departed.

Henry and Flavia sat down to dinner. She, relieved from the actual presence of poor Albert and his sufferings, chatted cheerfully away. He spoke little and ate nothing. Presently she ran away to exchange with Caroline.

"He is asleep," whispered Caroline, pointing to her imprisoned hand. "I will not leave him. Go down again; I will stay here."

"No!" said he, releasing her hand, "I am not asleep. Go, Caroline, and you, too, pretty Flavia: leave me here. I shall be quiet, and then I shall feel better."

They went down, and there he lay.

The light curtains, rising and falling to the wind, displayed the lovely landscape beyond, that beautiful world of which he was soon to take leave. The cheerful insects buzzed among the flowers; the wind murmured and whispered amid the trees, and the sounds of active life were heard in the distant fields and lanes. By-and-by the bell of a neighbouring church began to toll. He listened: it was the passing-bell. Slow, and solemn, and mournful, it fell upon his ear, calling him from this warm, sunny world of life to his cold, damp, solitary grave.

It was too much. He rose hastily, and followed the rest to the dining-room; called for food and for wine; and, as the momentary excitement poured the stream of life more fervently through his veins, he talked and smiled; and then they walked out, and enjoyed that beautiful evening in those beautiful grounds; and his friends began to rejoice in his strength, and attribute the langour of the morning to the accidental fatigue.

It was a happy, happy evening.

CHAPTER IV.

My lord advances with majestic mien,
Smit with the mighty pleasure, to be seen.—POPE.

HENRY spent a most painful month during his father's absence; his anxiety and embarrassment increasing daily, as fresh and fresh accounts poured in, and every morning produced some new proof of Mr. Wilmington's unbounded extravagance. The partners began to look unpleasantly. Jones growled, and Estcourt sneered; and Henry counted with a sort of angry impatience the days that were to elapse before his father's return.

In the mean time, Mr. Wilmington and his Lizzy pursued their delightful tour. Their pleasure consisted principally in driving, with all the *éclât* and hurry of foreign posting, to the principal inn of every place they visited, examining the *carte* and the appointments, and astonishing the delighted landlord by the magnificence of their orders, their apartments, *entrées*, and wines, being of course the most expensive that were to be had. If the day was very fine, and they not particularly idle, they would perhaps lounge out before dinner to visit one or two of the principal lions of the place; and Lizzy would take out her splendidly-bound sketch-book, and in a soft, indifferent kind of manner, make a few indistinct marks, which she fancied was making sketches; which sketches she would coquette about, and affect to hide from the enamoured husband; who, fortunately for her, was no judge of drawing. This, with being tired, interesting headaches, and a little gossipping with her maid, assisted by the never-to-be-exhausted pleasure of buying lace, trinkets, and finery, at the various places she visited, whiled away the time pretty well. Then she would walk through the picture galleries, and mark the principal pictures in her catalogue. But she scarcely gave herself time to look at them, and would not have had the slightest conception of their merit if she had. Moreover, she would write a few lines in her journal; and so, with sleeping a good deal, and eating not a little, she got along.

Mr. Wilmington was too proud of displaying the young and beautiful creature he had married, and too busy taking care of or adorning himself, to feel the time hang heavily upon his hands. The toilet, the table, and more especially the seeking out and purchasing articles of *vertù*, which he thought would demonstrate even to Estcourt the delicacy of his taste; learning all the names, qualities, and distinctions of the Rhine wines, and purchasing largely for his cellar, amused him very well. For the rest, he lay back dozing in his carriage, as they swept rapidly through the magnificent scenery of South Germany; though he had been awake enough, when they spent a few days, as they usually did, at the different Brunnens. There he displayed, much to his satisfaction, his own tall, slender figure, and the elegant figure of his beautiful wife, his equipages, dress, and expensive manner of living, before all the counts, barons, dukes, and princes, Russian, Hungarian, Austrian, Prussian, and Pole, which there abounded; eyeing at the same time the orders which adorned their button-holes with mingled envy and veneration.

Moreover, at these Brunnens, he was enabled to make a sort of acquaintance with many of these magnates. He had spoken to Prince This, and ridden with Count That, and lost his money to Baron So-and-so; he had heard himself called "the rich and handsome Englishman." Lizzy had become known, on her side, to princesses and landgravines; she had talked with ambassadresses and smiled upon princes royal.

In short, Mr. Wilmington, as he retraced his steps, felt excessively gratified and elevated in his own opinion, by the results of this expensive journey. And, certainly, if, as some one has said, self-conceit be one of the first blessings from heaven, it cannot be denied that he had very considerably increased his possessions in that respect; while Lizzy, who only wanted the gloss of foreign travel to finish the very complete education she had received at Mrs. Steelcollar's seminary, returned with the conviction that she was now the very model of what an elegant female, gifted with superior advantages, both from art and nature, ought to be.

When they arrived in Belgrave Square, where Mr. Wilmington, with his newly-acquired style of manners, entered his drawing-room in all the dignity of self-possession, his elegantly-dressed, foreign-looking wife hanging upon his arm, while extending one hand to his daughter, he nodded to his son, and Lizzy smiled and lisped out her tender expressions of pleasure at seeing her dear Caroline and Henry again. Flavia stood apart; for she happened to be there, measuring

them with her eye, and drinking in the whole meaning of the scene with mingled amusement and contempt.

"And Flavia, too; sweet Flavia!" lisped Mrs. Wilmington.

"Yes, Lizzy; here I am. How do you do?"

She did not know what to say.

"Miss L——, I am enchanted to find you here, honouring my daughter with your company," was Mr. Wilmington's address.

"Oh, sir! we have been a great deal together whilst you have been away; have not we, Caroline?"

They were still standing; like bad actors in a bad play, the characters could neither get on nor off. How could the piece advance when those who were to play the principal parts did not know what they would be at; and where the subordinate characters had too much taste and delicacy to take the lead? At last, however, they all reached their chairs, and Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington began to play grand company, as the children say, before their own son and daughter.

Harry was sitting rather apart, by one of the windows, looking harassed and uneasy. Caroline began to talk to Lizzy about her tour. Flavia sat down behind her, smiling to herself at the absurd figure they all made, in this affectionate family party, and wishing herself a thousand miles off; that is to say, in Berkeley Square, with her good, well-bred, simple grandmamma, even though Lord George should be there, rather than with those superfine people, who were too genteel to show a spark of natural affection; and, therefore, she, with whom to think was to act, and to wish to do, said—

"Henry, my footman is, I believe, in the hall, and I am going to walk home."

"I thought you would stay dinner to-day," said Caroline. "Mrs. Wilmington would be very happy, I am sure," recollecting herself, and appealing to Lizzy, who already began to look rather offended and uneasy at the daughter taking the liberty to make this invitation to her father's house.

"Indeed, dearest Flavia, it would make Mr. Wilmington and myself but too happy," she said, however.

"No, thank you all. I must go home to-day; I shall be expected."

Henry took his hat, as she left the room, and followed her down stairs.

"You will let me go with you, Flavia; I do not like that you should, at this time of day, too, walk up Grosvenor Place by yourself."

"Oh! thank you; I shall be delighted with your escort."

They left the house together, he walking by her side; but he did not offer his arm. He was silent and absorbed.

"What is the matter, Harry?" at last she said, in her sweetest tone. "Why do you look so unhappy? But I beg your pardon; I have no right to ask; family matters, I know they are; only tell me this: is there any reason why you should look so *very* unhappy?"

He sighed, but made no answer, and they proceeded. Presently a group of young men, on horseback, followed by their grooms, came up Grosvenor Place.

"What a sweet little figure!" cried one.

"What a gay Lothario by her side!" laughed another.

"Where are *you* off to, George?" exclaimed a third, as Lord George hastily dismounted, threw his bridle to his groom, and joined the walkers.

"What, in the name of all that's good, Flavia, can you be doing here at this time of day?"

"I am walking home."

"Walking home! Where is my grandmother's carriage? Where can you have been?"

"Oh! I have been at Mr. Wilmington's; and Mr. Henry Wilmington is so good as to escort me home."

"I will spare Mr. Henry Wilmington any further trouble," said Lord George, ceremoniously and haughtily; "take my arm, Flavia."

"Miss L—— condescended to accept of my services," said Henry; "and I hope not to be dismissed before we reach her door."

"Thank you!" said Flavia, looking a little embarrassed; "but I need give you no further trouble now. Good day, Mr. Wilmington!" and with a slight curtsey she walked away with Lord George.

It might have been observed that she called him Harry when alone with him, and Mr. Wilmington when in presence of Lord George. But poor Harry was consoled with no such reflection; he saw only the distinguished figure of this high-bred young man, and mentally contrasted it with his own homely appearance, as he, too, had walked up Grosvenor Place, the light figure of the lovely Flavia beside him.

He understood himself to be dismissed, as a matter of course, to make way for Lord George.

He sighed as one accustomed to disappointment sighs, and turned slowly homewards.

Lord George walked on, erect and triumphant, by the side of his young companion.

"Upon my soul, Flavia," said he, "you do show a most delectable taste in the selection of those you distinguish with your favour. I suppose the next thing we shall hear is, that you have eloped with that very choice specimen of a City merchant's son and heir; and we shall have you falling down at grandmamma's feet and asking her blessing upon so rational a choice."

"What nonsense you talk, Lord George!" she answered rather pettishly. "What vulgar nonsense! about City merchants, and runaway matches. Really, you would disgrace a French dancing-master at a second-rate boarding-school, with these supremely fine airs."

"So, so; we are in a huff. I beg ten thousand pardons. No idea things had gone so far, upon my honour."

"No, I am not in a huff; and you have no right to accuse me of being in a huff, which you invariably do when I think you vulgar or impertinent."

"Vulgar I may be," said he, with a self-satisfied smile and drawing himself up; "but impertinent," stooping down to her with much tenderness in his air, "I can scarcely conceive that I can be, in anything which concerns you, Flavia."

"And why not, I beg?"

"Why not? What a question! Is not everything you do, think, or say, of a million times more consequence to me than to any other creature breathing? Flavia, you know it; and why, in the name of mischief, you choose to amuse yourself and torment me, by coquetting with a Russian merchant's clerk, I confess, passes my conception. I own, if your choice were a little more elevated, there might be some excuse. A man does not feel so excessively mortified when he sees the woman he adores, adored and a little flattered by the adoration of men his equals, and perhaps his superiors. One may bear that; but such a dangler as this! Upon my life! I could scarcely help laughing, mad as I was, as I saw that pretty bonnet, that sweet little mantilla, and a figure, which might have belonged to the youngest of the Graces herself, by the side of honest, substantial cent. per cent."

Flavia turned away her head without making any reply, but she drew away her hand from Lord George's arm.

"Nay," said he, looking under her bonnet; "is it so *very* serious an affair? Nay, Flavia; if you are offended, and that little scolding tongue of yours is silent, I shall begin to think it more than a laughing matter; upon my word, I shall."

"I wish you wouldn't plague me so," impatiently shrugging her shoulder at him.

He laughed at the pretty pouter.

"You little love! you darling! you dear, dear, little Flavia! how can you be so cross?"

And he tried to replace her arm in his again; but she shook him off and walked on.

That day the duchess dined alone with her two grandchildren. The good duchess, who lamented, as a sensible, pious friend must do, the idle, thoughtless manner in which Lord George passed his time, and who saw little hope of any call to the public service—for him the best, nay, only chance of awakening the dormant good in his character—looked fondly to the hope that his passion for Flavia might exercise that beneficial influence over his mind which she so desired to see.

Few people, perhaps, would have looked for any very important influences from a gay, fluttering creature like this young girl; but the duchess understood her well, and discerned the steady good sense and intellectual vigour which that pretty smiling exterior concealed, and she desired no better chance for Lord George than to live under the influence of such a being.

The very large fortune, too, to which Flavia was heiress had some effect upon her wishes; though, to do her justice, slight in comparison to the other. However, that for all these reasons she did wish most ardently to see Lord George and Flavia united, is most certain; and in consequence, she did everything in her power to promote their being together. Flavia at eighteen was thus exposed to all the fascinations of a very handsome and really charming young man of fashion: but eighteen, heedless, short-sighted, vain and giddy as it is mostly considered to be, possesses in many lovely instances an innocent, disinterested, unsophisticated wisdom, which resembles that of the guileless child, wise in virtuous instincts, in a strong, uncompromising sense of right and wrong, in an enthusiastic power of moral approbation or disapprobation.

And Flavia possessed all this simple rectitude of taste and principle in its highest perfection.

Now the good old duchess dozed upon her couch after dinner, and Flavia sat by her side with her embroidering frame before her; and Lord George planted himself upon a footstool at her feet, talking to her in a low voice, and

sighing, and throwing an air of dismal melancholy into his face, which was partly the result of feeling, partly of design.

"Ah, Flavia! how insensible you are! How that needle goes in and out, in and out. You never once look at me: I could tear that cockatoo to pieces; you did not use to be so ill-natured. I said something in the park that made you angry. I see I did; I had not the least conception, upon my word, when I came down to dinner, that you could look so constrainedly, so unkindly at me; you know I dote on the very ground you tread on; that I love you more than the love of all brothers, cousins, friends, put together, and yet you torment me in this unaccountable manner."

She raised her fair young head from the frame over which she leant, shook back her flowing silken curls, fixed her eyes, pure and clear as those of an infant, seriously upon his face, and said—

"I do not like the way you talk to me, Lord George; and I think, if my grandmother heard you, she would say I was right."

"And what, my sweetest little girl," said he, more gravely than usual, for he was struck, as for the first time, with the serious expression of her face: "and what, my sweetest little girl," endeavouring to take her hand, but she kept it at her work; "what do I say, what can I say, that my grandmother would not approve? You do me wrong, Flavia, or you mistake me altogether. I never said, knowingly, to you, that thing which could displease an angel. What can you be thinking of?" and he laughed a little, as she thought, saucily.

She did not blush: she would not blush; but again she found herself embarrassed to express her meaning.

"I am sure," continued he, "I would rather die, and I should deserve to die, if I gave you cause to be offended at anything I said. Who can have put such nonsense into your head?" and he laughed again.

She was silent. It was plain he would not understand her meaning. She could not openly accuse him of that which she felt to be the truth: that he assumed a tone only justifiable in a lover declared and accepted; and that she had a suspicion that he did this by design, in order to involve her in terms of intimacy which she might find it impossible to break from. And she was quite right in this suspicion. He did act partly through calculation, though the affection he professed was most sincere, and he sincerely delighted in talking to her of it.

The effect, however, he produced by this behaviour was

the reverse of what he intended. He teased, frightened, perplexed, and offended her. She was teased by his declaration of partiality; offended by the presumption with which he assumed, as a matter of course, that it was to be returned, frightened, for she felt all was going on wrong; perplexed, for she felt that she ought, and did not know how, to set it right. And all her comfort was with Harry, Caroline, and Albert. Their simplicity, good faith, and good sense, formed the element in which she seemed to breathe freely, and which the tormenting ways of Lord George only made her sigh for the more.

CHAPTER V.

Yet, to be just to these poor men of pelf,
Each does but hate his neighbour as himself.—Pope.

That evening, which Lord George was sighing away at the feet of his little mistress, and which his poor little mistress spent in fidgeting and tormenting herself, and wishing she had never come home, was spent still more uncomfortably in Belgrave Square.

They were a family party. There were Mr. Wilmington, Lizzy, the good aunt, Caroline, and Henry.

Henry had returned from his walk, gloomy as a winter day. It was impossible for him to conquer or to hide his melancholy and depression. Caroline perceived it with sorrow and surprise. She could not conceive what had discomposed him so much. She had observed him looking uncomfortable during the morning, but there was a wintry darkness over his face now, which exceeded all she had seen before. She felt more than usually anxious and uneasy.

However, the dinner was got over, and they had assembled early in the drawing-room. Mr. Wilmington, as usual, careless and unobserving of others, perfectly insensible to the anxieties of his son and daughter, was engaged in unpacking some of his various objects of *vertù*, and displaying them to the best advantage about his drawing-room. Lizzy, a good deal tired and rather out of humour, was lounging rather sulkily upon a sofa; Caroline looking thoroughly uncomfortable; and Mrs. Vernon as cross as the tongs.

Henry walked up and down the room: now he looked

into a book, shut it again, and sighed; now he started and aroused himself as he was summoned from time to time to admire some of Mr. Wilmington's importations.

"A Danneker, Henry; look well, I thought, upon the slab. An Ariadne; pretty, isn't it? Handsome specimen of coloured glass this, I flatter myself. Take care, Howley, how you lift it. Heavy; colour very fine; the crimson particularly rich. Bless you! take care of that portfolio! original sketches by the first masters! Count Rozamufsky offered me twenty thousand rubles for my purchase: did not know I had an eye for these things. Who was it, Lizzy, that said that cup was a real *bijou?* The Princess what? pooh! I forget these names strangely."

"The Princess Demidoffsky, was it? Really I don't remember; and there is such a noise in that horrid square; and how is one to see anything by an English sun?"

"You can't see anything, to be sure, if you lie there," said Mrs. Vernon; "and as for the noise, you used to endure the noise of Wimpole Street, and be thankful for it."

"You are tired, my dear Lizzy," said Caroline, kindly; "one often feels things disagreeable when first one comes home, because one's spirits are exhausted."

"My goodness! how true that is, my dear! How horribly flat this stupid England does feel after that dear brilliant Continent! I am sure I wonder how you kill time here."

"Now, Mrs. Vernon, I have something for you to admire. I am sure this will be particularly to your taste: it is a most rare piece of antique carving, and cost me—faith, Hal, I am ashamed to say how much," began Mr. Wilmington again.

"What, this hideous thing!" said the uncompromising Mrs. Vernon.

"My dear madam, what do you say? I assure you it is the most astonishing piece ——"

"Oh, la!" said Lizzy; "don't tease Mrs. Vernon with *vertù;* she cares nothing about it. There, madam, I really hope you will like this little Dresden *déjeûner*."

"That is extremely pretty," said Caroline; "my aunt, I am sure ——"

"Why," said Mrs. Vernon, whose integrity of spirit was hardly proof against old china, and who felt mollified in spite of herself at the beauty of the offering, as she considered it to be; "it is very pretty of you, and I should be sorry ——"

"I am glad you admire this, at least, ma'am. I am sure I shall never endure to take my breakfast out of anything

else. I verily believe I could not put Spode's or Chamberlain's to my lips now, so I indulged myself with this little *déjeûner* for my own boudoir. One would not lose all delicacy of taste the moment one puts one's foot in this barbarous country. Caroline, my dear, I have brought you a *tasse* and *soucoupe;* and I hope Mrs. Vernon will do me the favour to accept of this," presenting a rather ordinary-looking little affair, intended to hold flowers. "I thought this would look pretty in your little drawing-room, ma'am."

"Thank you!—— Bless me! how unlucky!" cried Mrs. Vernon, letting the cup slip through her fingers as she received it, and it was dashed into a thousand pieces on the floor.

"Dear madam, how provoking! Really I am very sorry for you; but I hope I shall be able to find something else."

"Oh! don't trouble yourself. It is not of the least importance in the world."

"Henry, my dear, here is something for you. Come, do put aside that woe-begone look, and behave like a rationality: there's a good creature!" cried Lizzy, who, in displaying her treasures, had become animated again. Here is a drinking-glass for your *nécessaire de toilette.* You are a sloven, you sad boy, and want such little elegancies."

There had been no great extravagance here, but the glass was pretty enough, and Henry accepted it good-humouredly.

Mrs. Vernon looked as if she would have liked to handle the glass too.

Lizzy, however, once in for it, was not to be stopped. One article of selfish luxury or another succeeded the presents; and, so utterly vain and silly was she, and her perceptions so perverted, that she really believed she was raising herself in the opinions of her new relations by this exhibition.

"Now, my dears, let me show you my *nécessaire.* I protest I cannot exist without it. Everything in china, gold, and Bohemian glass: it really is a *bijou* altogether —— This lace I got—what's the name of the horrid place? I really own I was extravagant; but they all said it was so beautiful. The Comtesse Elise de Renault—la! what a vain creature she was!—was absolutely dying of despair because she could get none like it," &c.

While Henry's brow grew darker and darker, at last Mr. Wilmington said—

"Upon my soul, Henry, you are most depressingly silent this evening! I think, sir, you might pluck up a little cheerfulness to welcome your mother's return, and Caroline, too."

Caroline's eyes were fixed mournfully upon her brother: she could not divine the reason of this excessive melancholy.

Henry tried to laugh.

"Oh, sir! you know I am the stupidest fellow in the world."

"There *is* something the matter, however, Henry," said Mrs. Vernon; "tell us what it is?"

"Oh! business for to-morrow," said he again, with a forced laugh.

"Ay! business to-morrow," laughed Wilmington, affectedly; and turning on his heel, he hummed a French couplet to that effect.

And this is the way the first evening was passed.

Now it must be told that, during Mr. Wilmington's absence, Estcourt and Jones had embarked in some very advantageous speculations; and actuated partly by prudence (for they were with reason alarmed at the extent of property Mr. Wilmington was annually consuming), partly instigated by jealousy and a hearty dislike to their man, partly by a conviction that now was the time to get a very promising business entirely into their own hands, and thus divide the profits between two instead of three, they had made up their minds to dissolve the partnership.

By the articles of agreement, any two of the partners might effect this, upon condition of leaving it optional with the one who had not proposed the measure either to advance to the others the value of his several shares, retaining the concern in their own hands, or, failing this, to quit it upon the same conditions.

Both Jones and Estcourt felt convinced from what had lately been going on under their eyes, namely, the vain and unlimited expense in which Mr. Wilmington was indulging, and the symptoms of an exceeded income in the sale of sundry species of property, as above related, that this gentleman would not find it convenient, or even possible, to buy them both out. Nor did they imagine, knowing the character of the man and his reputation in the world of business, that moneyed friends would be found inclined to advance the requisite sums. They knew that his late marriage with a very pretty, dressy, extravagant girl, nearly thirty years younger than himself, and whose father's credit for wealth was not

particularly high, was a thing at which sensible men shook their heads ominously. So they decided that this was an opportunity not to be neglected of getting rid of a man whom one of the two despised, and the other secretly envied and hated.

So the next morning, when Mr. Wilmington, accompanied by his son, rode down into the city, these gentlemen, after a little humming, hawing, and hesitating, and a few smooth speeches from Estcourt (smooth as the blade of a sharp penknife), which followed the rather blunter and less polished exordium from Jones, concluded with—

"Views of things differing. Ideas as regarded money matters so widely contrasted. Partnerships unpleasant under such circumstances. Hope that there would be no interruption of private friendship," &c.; suggested a separation, and begged Mr. Wilmington, according to the conditions of the articles, to exercise his privilege, either of retaining the concern, advancing to them the value of their respective shares, or of quitting it altogether, upon receiving in ready money, or in bills at not more than three months' date, the amount of his own.

Mr. Wilmington was thunderstruck. He stood for a few moments pale, aghast, and literally speechless, before the cold and smooth Estcourt, who, far from appearing to notice his emotion, continued his discourse in that passionless, polite tone of voice which glides like cold venom through the veins of the excited listener.

Henry stood a little behind his father, his whole strength, moral and physical, sternly employed in mastering the vehement indignation which agitated his heart. His forehead was crimson, but he compressed his lips, and was resolutely silent. He had feared, it was true, that some such measure was in agitation, or would speedily be in agitation, unless his father should avert it by more prudent conduct. But so suddenly, without preparation! So immediately upon his return home! No explanation given—no time for explanation allowed—appeared to him a haste as unwarrantable as it was unhandsome and cruel.

He stood there, his eyes fixed upon his father. He witnessed the excess of an agitation which seemed to shake every muscle of his frame, with anxiety, but without surprise; desiring, rather than hoping, that he would have sufficient command over himself to preserve, outwardly at least, that calm and dignified demeanour which would have been so becoming under the circumstances.

But the silence of Wilmington lasted only so long as the

spasm at his heart forbade utterance. He then burst forth with the rage and violence common to characters so weak and excitable.

"Zounds, gentlemen! is this what I am to expect from you? Heaven and earth! what have we been about these last three years? I thought I had to do with friends and allies. D—— my soul! but it was with a couple of plotting *gentlemen*, who, the moment my back is turned, lay their heads together to oust me out of my own! But, d—— me if you shall succeed, though! Buy you out! Yes, thank heaven, I have enough to buy ten thousand such pitiful schemers as you out. You think to be too sharp with me. You think I want friends. Did you ever hear of one Craiglethorpe?"

"Upon my word," began Jones ——

"Sir," said Estcourt, "this passion, let me take the liberty to tell you, is very unseemly on your part, and the expressions made use of are not exactly what one would expect from a *polished gentleman* and man of the world, such as Mr. Wilmington. Had Mr. Craiglethorpe been at hand, there may be no doubt that he would have been but too happy to place the large fortune which I understand he has realised in India at your disposal; and, had that proved the case, unquestionably you might have been able to fulfil the necessary conditions of the articles; and Jones and I must have even done as well as we could, and made such a little pitiful business together as best we might. But you will please to recollect that three months is the extent of time allowed by the agreement for these arrangements; and, as my friend and I are anxious to lose no time, perhaps some gentleman a little nearer at hand than Mr. Craiglethorpe may be found to do the needful."

"He is coming home," said Wilmington, gnashing his teeth, "and he'll see you both d——d but he'll revenge me: make you sure of that!"

"Sir! upon my word," again put forward Jones ——

"Sir! father!" exclaimed Henry, stepping forward.

"Be quiet, Henry, with your mild, sheep-faced ways! What! d—— you! is a man to be imposed upon? to be swindled out of ——"

"Sir! this is language," said the imperturbable Estcourt, "as improper for you to use as for us to hear. A gentleman, Mr. Wilmington, I am sorry to find, needs to be told, is one who knows how to be master of himself upon all occasions, and is neither to be hurried into unseemly expressions with respect to others, nor to be heated by unseemly passion when

such terms are applied by childish rage to himself. Mr. Jones and I, let me tell you, sir, are honourable men, no more deserving of the expressions you are pleased to make use of than you are. We merely, in conformity to articles long since agreed upon, and in compliance with what, in our opinion, a due regard to our just interest requires, propose, in the most amicable manner, to terminate a connection with one—pardon me!—notwithstanding his acknowledged accomplishments—not exactly constituted for the conduct of a business of this description. You will excuse me; plain-dealing between friends is best."

"Between friends!" indignantly turning his back upon the polished speaker.

"I see," said Estcourt, with a smile of sarcastic pity at this childish effervescence of intemperate and undisciplined feelings, "we are wasting words here. Mr. Henry Wilmington, our respective men of business had better meet upon this occasion. I bid you good morning for the present. A few days will decide whether this counting-house is to be yours or ours. In the interim things had better proceed in the usual manner. It would be absurd and contemptible—a meanness, I flatter myself, of which I and my friend here are equally incapable—to run the slightest risk of injuring a concern with which, perhaps, in a few weeks, we may have nothing further to do."

And so saying, he bowed and left the room, mounted his horse, the completest thing of the kind in London, and followed by his neat and perfectly-appointed groom, rode quickly through the city and into the Regent's Park; his temper as little ruffled by the violence of his *quondam* friend as if he had been contending with a passionate child. As for compassionating his excessive agitation, or sympathizing in the slightest degree with his feelings, that was out of the question in this case, as in every other with Mr. Estcourt. That busy, fluttering, good old thing, the human heart, except as a cistern-wheel to forward the machinery of the body, had been left out of his composition. It was not that he *did* not, but that he *could* not, feel for anybody. He could scarcely be said to *feel* even for himself.

Jones was of more vulgar clay. Vulgar clay does, after all, feel for its fellow-dust; it is only those cold, highly-polished substances that are impenetrable to human tears. Jones was rough, coarse, and selfish, but he was not a stock or a stone.

"Henry," he said, in a low voice, "I am sorry," looking at Wilmington, who was pacing hastily and silently from one

end of the counting-house to the other, "I am really sorry. But, d'ye see, Estcourt and I don't much like this way of life of your father's. No pretence to interfere; better part at once."

"Interfere!" fiercely interrupted Wilmington; "interfere! Heavens and earth! I should like to see either of you meddling with me!"

"Well, my good friend, then, as Estcourt says, why do you put yourself into such a passion? There is nothing unreasonable in what we propose. You buy us out if you can; we buy you out if you can't. All quite fair and aboveboard; is it not, Henry?"

"My father is surprised," said Henry, "and you cannot wonder that he is somewhat indignant at this hasty and unexpected proceeding. But every one is the best judge of his own affairs, and you and Mr. Estcourt are undoubtedly both entitled to act in the manner you deem best calculated to promote your interests. Come, sir" (to his father) "let us mount our horses. There is nothing more for us to do here to-day."

"Nothing more! nothing more!" said poor Wilmington, almost choking, and casting one look round the room; one of those looks with which men regard for the last time the place endeared by the associations of many years. He took his son's arm, and quitted the spot.

He left Jones master of the field; who, after shrugging his shoulders and watching his old friend out of sight, returned to his desk, and to the interesting occupation of conducting a concern which he now looked upon as more than ever his own.

CHAPTER VI.

My tales of love were wont to weary you;
I know you joy not in a love discourse.
SHAKSPERE.

THE conviction that it was utterly impossible to raise the money to buy the other partners out pressed invincibly upon the minds of both father and son.

While Henry sighed at the recollection of that waste of property which had exposed his father to this insulting treatment, Wilmington groaned over the absence of Craiglethorpe. There was no chance or possibility of his returning or sending remittances in time to avert the catastrophe; therefore, all that could be done was to write a most indignant account of these proceedings to his friend, in which you may be sure neither partner was spared.

Yet it was rather as a matter of pique than from any other feeling that Wilmington was so desirous to baffle the designs of the others. His pride, or rather his vanity, was all in arms at the idea of being bought out; and, therefore, when, in due time, the affair was concluded, and he received a large sum as his share of this most lucrative concern, mortified to the quick, he began to look about for some grand speculation or other in which to invest his property, hoping by the brilliance of his success to triumph over his rivals.

Such a speculation was not long in presenting itself. In our immense commercial world opportunity is never wanting for the disposal of capital; and the most flattering prospects are for ever dazzling the eyes of the votaries of Fortune. Votaries as blindly devoted to the goddess of the chances may be found under the sober garb of the merchant as under the gayest vesture of fashion. Wilmington was, after all, indulging much the same spirit as a gambler at Crockford's. He hated labour, he hated thought; of that determined perseverance by which ultimate success is to be ensured he was incapable: he would have held it beneath him to plod and to toil. To make a brilliant stroke—to carry Fortune by a

coup de main, as it were—was equally flattering to his vanity and to his indolence.

Not so the more judicious Henry. As averse to the means by which such fortunes are acquired as indifferent to their possession when obtained, he used every argument with his father to induce him to content himself with the still handsome property left, to retrench his vain expenditure, and to live for himself and his family.

He might as well have talked to the winds. Wilmington contented himself with laughing at the prudential young man, as he called him, and pursued his career undauntedly.

In the mean time Flavia was harassed by Lord George's assiduities, which were more unremitting than ever; whilst Henry, troubled and unhappy, felt his anxieties increase with every fresh instance of his father's levity. He was more deeply engaged in business than ever, through his desire to maintain some order in his father's affairs. So that, while that father, gay and thoughtless, was driving his Lizzy about the Park, attending her to the opera, and exhibiting her at every place of public amusement, Henry could scarcely command an hour to himself, and would come home to dinner so thoroughly jaded and exhausted, that he had not the spirits to go out in the evening, not even when he expected to meet Flavia. Caroline, on the contrary, went out more than usual, as Lizzy made a great point of her accompanying her to her various parties, and she would not produce ill-will by refusing.

They often encountered Flavia, who always met them with affectionate cordiality, would say two or three pleasant things to Lizzy, take Caroline's hand, and look round disappointed. Lord George was never far from her side. One night the following conversation passed within hearing of Miss Wilmington and Lizzy:—

"Well, I am sure, I wonder at her; nay, I wonder at *him*."

"La! wonder at him! Why, don't you know she is a great Welsh heiress?"

"Yes; but it's nothing of a connection. Do you know, her grandfather made his fortune nobody knows how? Such a *mésalliance*, as it was thought, for her mother!"

"Oh! Lord George never heeds that; but I don't think she much likes him."

"Then I am sure it is a great shame if she does not. I know they are engaged."

"Did you hear that, Caroline?" said Lizzy. "So she has secured him, after all. I never thought Lord George would have condescended so far." Her countenance darkening with envy, "Why, he is grandson to the Duke of C——."

"I cannot think the report can be true," said Caroline, looking to the other end of the room where Flavia sat, her face averted, and eyes fixed upon the floor, half-turned from Lord George, who was talking to her with the greatest animation. "I do not think she likes him, and Flavia is not weak enough to be persuaded into marrying any one she does not really like."

"Not like him! That is so odd of you. As if any one could possibly help liking him!"

Flavia soon after this rose and joined them, and Lord George walked away.

"Caroline, I see nothing of you now," said she.

"That is your own fault, my dear; you never come to us, and we cannot with propriety go to you."

"No," said Lizzy, "you live with such fine folks, I wonder you condescend to acknowledge us; and I suppose we must not look for the favour long. I see a certain gentleman walks away when you come near us."

"That is no affair of mine, Lizzy."

"Oh, no! you have no influence, I perceive! none in the least. But if you really are not above such vulgar things, perhaps you will honour me with your company on the 27th," presenting a card.

"I should be delighted; but I have no chaperone."

"If old times were old times, and old friends were old friends, you would not want a chaperone where I was," said Mrs. Wilmington.

"No, that I am sure I should not. But the coming?"

"It could all be arranged, Lizzy," said Caroline, "if you would ask Flavia to let me fetch her in the morning. Then she can dress in my room, and we can take her home the following day, if you are not grown too fine, dear Flavia," added she, in a caressing tone.

"Dearest Caroline, that I am not; I shall like it of all things. I will settle it with the duchess, who is good nature itself, and I will be sure to be ready. Call for me early; that's a good girl."

"Flavia," said Lord George, coming up with a lowering brow, "Lady Symes has been waiting for you these two hours—have you done?"

And he made a distant bow to her two friends.

"I am sorry I have kept her waiting. Good night, dear Caroline! don't forget to fetch me. I am sure the duchess will let me go," looking round at Lord George as she went away.

"Go! go where?"

"To a ball at Mrs. Wilmington's on the 27th."

"Always at those cursed Wilmingtons'. You shan't go."

"Shan't go! Who shall prevent me?"

"I will, Flavia. I see you are determined to provoke me; but, by heavens and earth, you had better not!"

She made no answer, but went up to Lady Symes, who conveyed her to the duchess's door, and there left her.

She crossed the hall and went up-stairs, attended by a footman carrying a light. She took it from him in the gallery, intending to go into her own room, but recollecting a book she wanted from the drawing-room, turned in there first.

She started; for on the sofa lay Lord George. He sprang up, and before she could prevent him, shut the door. She went to the table to look for her book; he came up to her.

"Flavia, I must—I will understand you; and no better opportunity than this for coming to an explanation. I see you hate and detest me!" he went on passionately; "I see all I suffer is nothing in your eyes; I see my ruin, my irretrievable ruin now and hereafter, is nothing to you. You do not care, insensible and child that you are. But no; you are no child. You ——"

"True, George, I am no longer a child; and this is a persecution to which I will not submit. I do not know why or by what right you assume this tone to me. Let me go now, for I will not stay one moment with you."

"You shall stay; you shall hear me!" laying his hand upon the lock of the door; "you shall hear me, cruel Flavia. I love you; oh! how dearly! how dearly! and you will not even listen to me. You trifle with me in the most barbarous manner."

"I do not trifle with you," said she, looking very grave at this accusation. "I never trifled with you for a single moment. I always said I did not like your way of talking to me, and I say it again. I cannot endure it; it teazes me to death; it makes me wretched. I insist upon your letting me go away, or I never will speak to you any more."

"How must I speak? What must I say, Flavia? We are almost engaged to each other; our parents have pledged themselves. Your mother has promised that your wealth

shall not leave her noble family; that it shall not enrich a despicable adventurer. You are mine, and you know it."

"I know nothing of it; and I never will be yours," said she, with vehemence. "Now I understand you, now you speak out; but I never, never, never will be yours! Lord George, open the door."

"I will not, till you have told me one thing."

"I will tell you nothing. Are you not ashamed to keep me here against my will? I shall end by detesting you."

"Oh, Flavia!" and he flung himself at her feet; "how can you? how can you? you that I loved from the time you were a little infant in your nurse's arms; the only thing in the world I ever really did love! It is not, heaven forbid! it is not your money, which, you know, our parents—our good grandmother, our mothers—wish so earnestly to retain (heaven bless them for wishing me happy!) but, oh, my Flavia! my Flavia! it is yourself; your loveliness, as I saw you in your little white frock; a child you were then, a child you are now; you have the sweetness and innocence of a little child; and I love you, I idolize you, so help me heaven! as never creature loved creature before. Don't turn me off, and above all, not for him."

"If you are serious," said she, much affected by this wild and passionate address, "you ought to feel, Lord George, that for me to listen to you here, and at such an hour as this, child as I am, and long as we have known each other, is what I ought not to do. I love you, George," the tears stood in her eyes, "and I could do anything to make you happy; but if you mean —— if you intend, by what you say of our parents, I had better speak it out; yes, difficult as it is, I will. Don't, George, don't hope or expect anything from me; you will be disappointed if you do. My mother! I love her and reverence her; but in a matter such as this, no mother shall or can decide for me." And she turned away.

"What do you mean?" cried he, vehemently, following her. "You can't; you don't mean; you are not *serious!* You are only trifling with me."

"I am not trifling, heaven knows! and I must and will go."

"You shall not go till you have told me—do you? Ah, heaven! don't say it ——" looking earnestly into her face for a moment. "Yes, yes; go away, go away; I see how it is. I want to hear no more from you; but yet I cannot believe that you do not and will not love me. By heaven! you shall not go till, at least, you tell me this."

"I will go, Lord George; I insist upon your opening the door instantly. I will hate you as long as I live if you don't."

"Nay, then," said he mournfully, "if you hate me so much ——" and he withdrew from the door. She opened it, and ran up stairs.

When there, she sat down to think; the impropriety of her present position pressed so strongly upon her mind, that she determined to speak to the duchess on the subject of Lord George's conduct the next morning. To write to her mother and beg to be recalled home would have seemed to be a still more natural step; but to be called home was what Flavia dreaded. She knew her mother's violent and ungovernable temper too well; she knew how ardently she desired to see the large fortune her daughter inherited enriching her own connections; she knew she should find no security from persecution on the subject of Lord George. Her sole dependence was upon the goodness and justice of the duchess; but the justice and goodness, be they ever so great, of one so old and feeble, are but a frail dependence; and the thoughts of the poor young creature made a mournful circuit among her friends, and found but one to whom she could fly for sympathy and protection. She could in fancy fly to Caroline, as to some being of a higher nature than her own, and cry for support, and find it. And behind Caroline was figured one, kind, and tender, and considerate, and good, who would open his arms and shelter her, and she would be safe; shelter her from the injustice of her relations; from the perplexities, vexations, and unceasing worries of the world in which she lived, and the pursuit of the man she dreaded and feared.

The next day Flavia resolved to speak to the duchess; but the next day the duchess was attacked by one of her illnesses, and Flavia dared not agitate her by a conversation of this nature; all she could do, therefore, was to install herself in the duchess's room, and avoid meeting Lord George as much as possible.

CHAPTER VII.

> Nor shall I to the work thou enterprisest
> Be wanting, but afford thee equal aid.—MILTON.

THIS same morning two events happened at Mr. Wilmington's.

Whilst they were at breakfast the letters came in, and Mr. Wilmington, as usual, impatiently seized upon and began to distribute them.

"One overland from India," cried he, and opened it with impatience.

He read it at once with sparkling eyes.

"Heavens and earth! Harry, here's news!"

"What is that, sir?" said Henry, surprised at the exultation of his countenance.

"Nothing! nothing!" said he, suddenly checking himself; and he thrust the letter into his pocket, rose, and left the room.

Henry's eyes followed him to the door, and then returned to his newspaper.

"Well," said Lizzy, "Mr. Wilmington is mighty close this morning. I wonder what his great news is. But, Harry, I have some news for you: your favourite, Miss Flavia, is going to be married."

Henry did not start; he looked quietly up.

"I am not surprised to hear it, ma'am."

"And who do you think it is to?"

"To Lord George, ma'am, of course."

"Exactly so. I am assured they are absolutely engaged. Henry looked at Caroline.

"I think it still very doubtful," said Caroline.

In the mean time, Mr. Wilmington retired to his own room, and read over and over again, with rapturous delight, this short and pithy letter:—

"Dear Chummy—That spec. sounds well. Sorry you should lose such an opportunity of raising the wind. Show Estcourt we understand a trick or two yet; sorry I was not in England. I do hate that smooth-faced rascal. Draw on White and Batchelor, of Calcutta, for one hundred thousand pounds. Invest in t'other spec. Mind and secure the principal, and make as much for self and brats as you can. Wring the envious devil's heart, and let me see thee flashy and fine, my boy.

"G. Craiglethorpe."

The matter in question was an immense mining speculation, of which Wilmington had received early intelligence, and in which he was wild to take a large share; but as he managed matters he could not easily command the requisite capital to accomplish this. He was impressed with the idea, also, that should he not be able to take advantage of the offer made to him, his old rival, Estcourt, would be applied to, and he believed would be but too happy to seize upon the tempting opportunity. In this last supposition, however, I believe he was mistaken. He had, therefore, written overland to his old friend Mr. Craiglethorpe, who happened at this moment to be meditating the transfer of the large fortune which he had realised in the East to his native country. It was his desire, then, to end his days in the neighbourhood of the only two people he had ever cared for upon earth; namely, Albert Selwyn and Mr. Wilmington. It was believed that he wished to make a match between Albert and Caroline, in order to unite himself still more closely with the man to whom he had so unaccountably attached himself.

In truth, Wilmington possessed that incomprehensible influence over Craiglethorpe's mind which a gay, headstrong, flashy character sometimes exercises over a dry, cold, and cynical one. Craiglethorpe had been Wilmington's godfather, and from his boyhood had felt an almost ludicrous pride and vanity in the fine person, fine features, fine spirits, and, as he thought, fine manners of his godson.

On the other hand, Estcourt, who happened to have been educated at the same school with Wilmington, and, owing to connections of business, had been often thrown into communication with Craiglethorpe, managed to draw upon himself

that gentleman's most hearty aversion; so that, through the whole subsequent course of their lives, it had been his delight to maintain his brilliant favourite in opposition to his subtle, sneering, sarcastic rival. Estcourt possessed a real superiority of intellect and manners that Craiglethorpe at once feared and detested; whilst Wilmington, with all his brilliancy, had unconsciously flattered the self-love of the humorist by the real inferiority of his understanding.

Wilmington, on second thoughts, as we have seen, had forborne to communicate Mr. Craiglethorpe's important letter to Henry. He doubted whether his son would approve the risking so large a sum belonging to another upon the doubtful speculation of mining; and though he assured himself that never was speculation so secure and promising, a something whispered to him that he had better keep his intentions to himself.

So he ordered his horse, and rode down to the City alone, leaving Henry to finish his breakfast, and, finding his father had gone without him, to spend the morning with poor Selwyn.

Mr. Wilmington returned in the evening in the wildest spirits. The shares in the mining speculation were secured, and the one hundred thousand pounds invested. The promises of the proprietors were almost unlimited; twenty, thirty, forty per cent. dividend upon the original capital subscribed was nothing; nothing the doubling, trebling, quadrupling, of the interest itself.

"Thursday fortnight is your ball, my dear Lizzy. There is plenty of time for preparation; and I give you one hint, *en passant:* you need not spare expense. Harry, my good fellow, don't look so deucedly prudent; Golconda, my lad! What if I have secured a Golconda," and he tossed Craiglethorpe's letter to his son.

"What spec. does he speak of?" said Henry, quietly.

"Why, what spec. should he speak of but the Melwyn copper mines? What spec. i'faith, but Golding and Purchas's? Secured twenty thousand shares this morning!"

"I hope not, sir; I hope not!"

"You hope not! and why, in the devil's name, wiseacre?"

"I hope, sir, you have not risked Mr. Craiglethorpe's money in so perilous a speculation."

"Risked old Craigie's money! What ails the lad? Dost thou not see, silly one, or wilt thou not see, that Craigie himself approves of it? and I suppose, whatever may be

your opinion of my judgment in these matters, you will not dispute his."

"Things are not as they are represented," persisted Henry; "and, indeed, my dear father ——"

"And, indeed, Henry," interrupted Lizzy, who, with her usual quickness as regarded all that concerned her own interests, had guessed the matter in dispute; "I should think a father is likely to be a rather better judge of his own affairs than his inexperienced son."

One of those commonplaces with which commonplacers are accustomed to endeavour to stop the mouths of the more far-seeing and discerning.

"I should think a father is likely to be a better judge of his own affairs than his more inexperienced son."

"So generous a confidence! So large a sum! So doubtful a speculation! Oh, sir! I hope it is not too late; reflect a little. Caroline, Caroline!" She was painting at the other end of the large drawing-room. "Caroline, come to my assistance; I may tell her, sir?" looking at his father; and without waiting for his permission, he gave her Craiglethorpe's letter. "So great! so generous a confidence! Oh, sir! oh, father!"

"What the devil!" cried Wilmington, "is all this fuss about? Would you, in your wisdom, have me cast away such an opportunity of enriching us all for the rest of our lives? Why, I know he'd give me credit for thrice the sum. I tell you they talk of forty per cent. dividends; only think of that? Our fortune is trebled; the capital will quadruple itself. But I waste my breath," added he, passionately, "in arguing with such a poor, spiritless"—wretch, he was about to say; he condescended to alter it to "fellow as you."

Henry looked hurt, but he was not to be baffled.

"Speak, Caroline!" he said.

"Father," said Caroline, going up to him, "forgive me. Do not risk this money. If it should be lost?"

"If it should be lost! As if it were likely to be lost!"

"Henry thinks ——" persisted she, gently.

"And what, in the name of all that's absurd," starting up in a rage, "does it signify to me what *Henry* thinks! A poor, tame, spiritless creature, without energy to do anything either for himself or others! Is he to guide me? Pretty doings, methinks; a man like *me* to be governed by a man like *him!* Pretty doings for all of us! Sitting moping there like a Miss Molly with his hands before him. That's not *my* way, Miss Caroline."

"Indeed," put in Lizzy again, "I agree with you, Mr.

Wilmington; it is rather too much to expect that your lofty spirit of enterprise should be checked by one —— Really, Henry, I am astonished at you."

Mr. Wilmington was not an ill-natured, he was only an obstinate, shallow, brilliant fool. He glanced at the faces of his children, now filled with the most painful expression of anxiety; recovered his temper, laughed, and said—

"Come, come, I forgive you both; so no more about it. Lizzy, my dear, all I have to beg is, that no expense may be spared upon your first ball. Estcourt will be there, and Lord George intends to honour us, I believe, and the Count and Countess Manvelle, and the Prince Paulinsky, and the Baron d'Avenheim, &c.; for the love of heaven, my dear, show your *savoir faire!* Let us have no miserable economies, no spoiling of a handsome entertainment by a little foolish saving. And these, ladies, are for your fair selves." And he presented an *étui* to each.

"La! my dear Mr. Wilmington, what a sweet set! I must indeed give you a kiss for this *petite galanterie;*" and she went up affectedly and kissed his forehead.

"What have you got, Caroline?"

Caroline opened her case.

"Beautiful things, indeed!" said Lizzy, in a tone through which a little ill-humour penetrated; "very handsome for an *unmarried* woman, I must say; they don't usually wear such things."

"Oh! Caroline always looked like a married woman," said Wilmington, laughing. "She looks ten years older than you do, Lizzy."

"Then no doubt it is all right. She ought to wear handsomer things than me."

"Handsomer! why, I thought yours were the handsomest, I'm sure; all I know is, they cost twice as much."

"Did they? I should not have thought it; but mine are, I see, very pretty."

"Pray," said Caroline, "take which you like best."

"Thank you! Oh! I dare say you like mine better, now you hear what they have cost."

"No," said Caroline, steadily, "I like those my father was so good as to choose for me the best; and as you do not want to change, I will keep them. Thank you, my dear father; but—but ——"

"But what? Everlasting buts!" said he, peevishly.

"Do not buy any more ornaments for me. These are so handsome that they will do for all my grand occasions for a century."

"I should think they might, indeed!" said Lizzy, with an envious toss of her head.

"Well, ladies," said Mr. Wilmington, "I meant to please you both; I am sorry I have not succeeded."

"Not succeeded! Oh, papa!" said Caroline, kissing his hand.

"I am sure I said I was very much obliged to you," said Lizzy, coldly; "but two sets of a morning will make Henry censure your extravagance, I fear."

She turned round, but Henry had left the room.

He entered that of Selwyn; that refuge for his perplexities and anxieties.

"What is the matter, my good fellow?" cried Selwyn as he entered, he looked so pale and distressed.

"Oh, Albert!" throwing himself into a chair, "what shall I do?"

"What is the matter, Henry?"

"So generous a confidence!" repeating the idea which had fastened upon his mind; "so dangerous a speculation!"

"What is the matter?" persisted Albert.

"Oh, Albert!" if this money should be lost, I should shoot myself, I think!"

"Tell me what is the matter."

With many interruptions, and with exclamations unusual for him, Henry repeated his story, adding—

"My father knows my opinion of these men. I believe them to be unprincipled adventurers; he therefore never consulted me till it was too late. One hundred thousand pounds of another man's money! This eager desire of gain; this careless extravagance; this indifference to all responsibility; this insensibility to all that is nice and honourable! Oh, Albert!"

"Why," said Selwyn, "you need not trouble yourself so very much about it, Henry; my uncle is cruel rich, and, if this money be lost, will scarcely miss it. He has no children, nobody he cares for to inherit his vast fortune but my poor dying self. Besides, he is so fond of your father that I verily believe he would rather lose by him than gain by any other man. Suppose the worst—that he does lose it—before my uncle can have felt that loss he will be richer by near a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, which I shall leave him. Barring a few legacies, every penny of mine will be his; he made it for my father, and he shall have it again. It will just come in, I calculate, about the right time to stop the gap. This spec. as he calls it, will hold together, at all events, longer than this dust," looking at himself with a faint laugh.

An expression of the acutest pain was on the brow of Henry during this discourse of his friend. He looked at Selwyn with eyes darkened over with sorrow, as they sadly wandered over the rapidly wasting form. At last he replied gravely—

"I do not think that which you have said makes the slightest difference in the right or the wrong of this affair. It is true Mr. Craiglethorpe authorised my father to make use of the money in this way, but it was upon my father's own representation. The risk which he is running is desperate, and with another man's money, and that man the most generous friend in the world; and all to gain a large sum for himself, which he cannot want except to gratify the wildest passion for expense, to gratify a silly —— I cannot endure it; I am miserable. And then for consolation what do you offer me? Oh, Selwyn! at what a price!"

"The price, my dear lad, must be paid at all events. I must shortly depart, it is plain. If you like it, I will mention all this in my will, and say I leave him my fortune as a compensation."

"No, my dear, generous Albert! nothing can alter the right and the wrong of the affair," said Henry, sadly; "it is evil, and it will end in evil, depend upon it."

"But very likely we are vexing ourselves to no purpose," said Selwyn, wishing to cheer him. "How do you know? This grand spec. may turn out very well, after all."

"No," said Henry, "I seem to have the fatal gift of Cassandra; my evil forebodings, though they cannot persuade others, rarely deceive myself. I am certain all this will end ill."

"You are going to have grand doings on the 27th?" said Albert, to change the conversation.

"Yes, I believe so; Mrs. Wilmington gives a ball."

"She has sent me a card: I shall go."

"You don't mean it? so late! Don't think of it."

"I shall come, depend upon it; I must see my Caroline again. In a ball-room one is in more perfect solitude than in almost any place. I must see her in solitude, as I never, prisoner as I am, can hope to see her elsewhere; I shall have some talk with her alone: it will be, perhaps, the last time. If I were to die in consequence, I should have bought that happiness cheaply; so I shall come."

CHAPTER VIII.

Why love among the virtues is not known;
It is, that love contracts them all in one.—DONNE.

THURSDAY night, the 27th, arrived, and the rooms began to fill; and there was Lizzy receiving her company. She was in a dress of the richest satin and blonde, decorated with bouquets of jewels; on her fine hair a wreath of diamonds; her fine features, her fine figure, displayed to the greatest advantage. Yet, handsome as she looked, how many things were wanting! Everything that constitutes the soul of beauty was wanting there. There was an emptiness, a certain washiness of colours, if I may say so; a feebleness in the outlines, a drawling, affected coldness of manner and gesture which contrasted strongly with the olive tints of Caroline's face, her serene noble brow, her dark calm eyes, her figure such as the pencil of a Carracci might have drawn; and with Flavia—sparkling, living, feeling, delicate, playful Flavia.

Mr. Wilmington was, as usual, elegantly, but too youthfully dressed. The whiteness of his hand, on which one fine diamond was sparkling; the richness of his dress, the soft colours just peeping out from beneath his waistcoat; the beauty of his fine brown hair, his tall and slender figure, and the gaiety of his whole appearance, made him look scarcely five-and-thirty.

Henry was there, vainly endeavouring to dispel the melancholy which depressed his spirits. He was plainly dressed, almost below the occasion; as a man dresses whose whole soul is absorbed in other things. He seemed scarcely even to listen to Flavia, who *would* chatter to him.

Selwyn had already arrived; the interesting, dying Selwyn; languid, attenuated; a form already, as it were, spiritualised. His large mournful eyes are fixed upon his Caroline. Caroline, more moved than she had ever been before—moved to a deep, earnest tenderness for the fated and unfortunate young man (for Henry had taken care to repeat his last conversation with her)—sat on the sofa by him, talking to him with a

sort of soft gravity, pouring forth those treasures of mind which, in conversation with her intimate friends, she displayed in such an eminent degree: and Selwyn was happy.

Mr. Wilmington kept glancing at them from time to time, satisfying himself that the hundred and fifty thousand pounds were already in his family, already *his;* for it was his habit to consider as resources all that belonged to those he could influence.

Lizzy was so occupied with herself that she had not time to make remarks; only she thought Flavia's dress very plain, and was half-inclined to be offended at it; for Flavia had no ornaments on her pale blue dress; only three roses in her hair; no jewels but her eyes, those sweet bright eyes, more than usually bright; for Flavia had already forgotten her troubles, and, by the side of Henry, felt so safe and happy that she remembered not that evenings must have an end, or that there was a Lord George in the world.

And so the room fills with great people and with little people, tall people and short people, fair people and brown people, rich people and poor people; agreeing only in these two particulars, that, rich or poor, tall or short, great or little, all are, without exception, very well dressed, and all are young. All are handsome, too, I think, whenever I look at a well-filled ball-room.

Lizzy opened the ball, and Caroline followed. Then came princes and princesses, countesses and counts, barons and baronesses innumerable, a few English titles, and a profusion of that immense *oi polloi* of English society, those swarms of rich people who drive their carriages, live in handsome houses, give handsome dinners and gay balls, and form the mass in every gay crowd. They eat, they flutter, they enjoy, and die. Mr. Wilmington's rooms swarmed with such; and a very good-looking, well-dressed, happy-looking set of people they were. But they did not satisfy Wilmington's craving ambition for fashion, more especially when Estcourt (for a sort of hollow peace having been cooked up with his late friends, Mr. Wilmington could not forego the pleasure of parading his magnificence before his late rival)—more especially when Estcourt, his eye-glass stuck in his eye, might be seen walking up and down, muttering to himself, loud enough to be heard by everybody, "Very handsome entertainment; beautiful rooms; gad, very pretty, nice-looking girls; nobody one knows. Who's that? Miss Freeman! who's she? Pretty black eyes there."

"That," said Wilmington, "is Miss L——, the Duchess of B——'s grand-daughter."

"Ha! a pretty little fairy. Her grandfather was in Gordon's house, I think? A *mésalliance*. Did they ever forgive it?"

"She is staying with the duchess now."

"So, so! Is the old dowager here?"

"No; too ill to come."

"So I thought. Who's that?"

"That's Lord George."

"George? Lord George who? There are a good many of these Lord Georges."

"Lord George D——."

"A fine-looking young man. Seems particularly attentive to his partner, and particularly inattentive to everybody else. Just the way with these young sparks of fashion. What brought him here?"

"He's a distant connection of ours: did you not know?" said Wilmington, writhing under these petty nettle-whippings.

"Oh!"

And this is what Wilmington got for his money, when he laid it out to dazzle Mr. Estcourt.

"You do not even look at me, Flavia," said Lord George. "Your whole attention is wandering: you don't even hear what I say."

"Yes, I do. I am listening."

"And looking always another way."

"No, I am not," turning her eyes towards him: for Henry, on whom she had been gazing intently, and who had been in conversation with Estcourt, just now quitted the room.

"What is it that fills your thoughts? For I am sure," said he again, after once more vainly endeavouring to make her converse; "I am sure there must be some cause for your unusual pre-occupation and silence."

"Well, then," impatiently, "I was thinking how unjust is Fate."

"Very deep and new that! And pray what instance of her injustice might present itself just now to your philosophical speculations? My own hard, cruel destiny, I should think, would furnish an excellent example."

"Yours!"

"Yes, mine; for you hate me."

"Yours! You do not know what care or sorrow is, you young men of fashion! You know nothing of realities."

"Realities! Where did you get that word?"

"Real care, real sorrow, disappointment, death," said she, now turning her eyes from the place where Henry had disappeared to the spot where Selwyn, exhausted and ill, was buried in an arm-chair, exhausted and panting for breath.

"Upon my soul, Flavia, you are too bad! I shall hate him next."

"How ill he looks! I will go to him."

"Upon my word, you improve. Pray go and pet him before the whole room. He has eight thousand a-year, a fine jointure, and soon to be had."

"Contemptible! Always money, money! Mean motives; mean ideas," muttered she.

She glided away, however, and got to Selwyn.

"Mr. Selwyn, you look very tired. This room is too hot for you. Will you not go into another?"

"I am tired," said he; "but it is not that. Where is Henry gone?"

"I don't know; he has left the room."

"That odious Estcourt, that bird of ill-omen, has been whispering to him. I saw them together. Something has vexed Henry. I want to speak to him, and yet I feel afraid to stir; for, to own the truth," coughing, "I feel unequal to pushing through that crowd at the door. Yet something is amiss, I am sure."

"Shall I go and see where he is, and try to bring him to you?" said Flavia.

"Do, my dear," said the sick man, with the paternal familiarity of sickness. Sickness gives the privileges of old age. "And, Flavia, tell him from me, whatever is the matter, to return to the room now. He must summon his fortitude; it is necessary."

She glided away, slid through the gay crowds that thronged the door of the drawing-room, entered another, gaily lighted, but almost deserted, passed through another emptier still, and entered the boudoir, faintly illuminated from the other rooms; for the lights, by some negligence, had here been suffered to burn so dimly, that it was as twilight after the brilliancy of the others.

He was on a low settee, his hands covering his face.

She stepped softly up to him.

"My dear Henry, what is the matter?"

He lifted up his head. His expression was miserable.

"Flavia! What are you come here for?"

"We have missed you, Henry. Selwyn misses you. He asked me to come and look for you. Something is the matter, he is sure. He begs you not to go away in this manner. He begs you to collect your spirits and fortitude. He begs ——"

"I am ashamed of myself," said Henry, rousing himself. "I ought to blush for my weakness. But, oh, Flavia! there are moments too much for the fortitude of any man; how much more so for that of such a poor, poor creature as I am!"

"Don't speak in that way, Henry. It is unworthy of you thus to undervalue yourself. Whatever man can do I am sure will be done by you, in every circumstance. But why are you so very unhappy?"

"My Flavia!" lifting up eyes of such melancholy tenderness, that her very heart was melted; "my Flavia, there is much to make me feel anxious and perplexed; but one word from you. Fool that I am! My sweetest! Forgive me, Flavia; I heard some bad news to-night."

"From that Estcourt? Don't plague yourself about what *he* says. What is this horrid money matter which worries and teases you all so? Dear Henry, you at least should be above it."

"Alas! the money! —— but the pit of inextricable difficulties into which he is plunging; his friend's confidence, his honour, his credit, in jeopardy! Merciful heaven! what will become of it all?"

"All what, Henry? Don't look so wretched."

"And then to see you —— But what right have I to think of you, ruined as we shall be; as we are? Flavia, I have no right to think of you; and yet, and yet, whilst my ears were drinking in this wretched information, to see you, oh, Flavia! This was, this is too much for me."

"What wretched information do you speak of! Tell *me*, Henry. You used to tell your little Flavia everything."

"*My* little Flavia! Alas, alas! those times are past for ever; yet pity me, Flavia. My father has risked money not his own, and it is now almost certain that he will lose it, and if so, that he will never be able to repay it; and his rectitude and honour are at stake. And I, his son, can neither avert the evil nor assist him to meet its consequences. I am a poor, helpless, spiritless being! Even at this very moment, when the situation of his affairs demands my undivided energy, my very heart is dying within me for

griefs altogether my own. I *am* a poor creature, as he called me."

"Henry, Henry!" said she, sitting down by him; and, trying to uncover his face, she gently pulled his hands away. There was the artless innocence of an affectionate little child in all her proceedings. "Look up, dear Henry; don't be so miserable; look up. Cannot I do something? I believe I am to have a great deal of this tiresome money some time; it is all at your service, dear Henry, if that will do any good."

He could not bear this; he pushed away her hands.

"Help me! No, no; nothing you can do."

She was hurt at this, and the tears came into her eyes.

"This is very unkind. You are like the rest. I thought you would never be unkind to me."

"Was I unkind? Oh, Flavia!"

"Everybody vexes me; but I thought you and Caroline would never be unkind; I thought I was safe from trouble with you."

"Trouble! But you will soon have a protector who adores you."

"I! Who?"

"Lord George."

"Lord George! Never, never! *He* protect me! he torments and distresses me till I don't know what to do. And you, Henry, my only friend, you are like the rest; so unkind to me!"

"Unkind to thee, my Flavia! Oh that I might open these arms to shelter thee for ever!"

He opened them, and she sank upon his breast.

She did not think; she did not know; it was one sweet impulse with them both. Not one word was spoken; one close embrace, heart to heart, and it was as if they had been betrothed for years.

Flavia soon recovered herself; and then they sat together on the sofa, hand in hand, conversing with the sweet, almost conjugal confidence of those who know neither distrust nor reserve; Henry's heart flooding over with peace and joy; Flavia tranquil and blest. The fluttering, frightened dove had found its home; the beating heart, the trembling spirits, were hushed to a sweet repose.

He spoke of his perplexities and anxieties, and found that sweet sympathy, and that ready comprehension, which a plain, sensible, and very feeling man asks from his more susceptible and lively partner; that species of instinctive quickness of apprehension, and ready judgment, with which

attachment to a wise and worthy man seems at once to endow a lively and intelligent girl. And she rejoiced, as it is the nature of woman to rejoice, in the force and capacity of that spirit, which by its influence seemed at once to enlarge and strengthen, whilst it controlled her own.

Sweet, beneficent provision of nature! Eden of the world! Yes, paradise is there.

To tread the thorny paths of this world together; to endure its inevitable sorrows and struggle with its cares and difficulties; to fight the good fight of virtuous duty; to weep over the griefs, and alleviate the sufferings of their kind; to rear, in that atmosphere of love, young, fair creatures, that should succeed in that worthy enterprise; to grow gray in cordial, undiminished affection, and to lay their heads in one common grave: such was the prospect this young, gay creature imagined to herself in a union with the excellent Henry; to this hope this rosy, laughing fairy sacrificed all those brilliant seductions of rank, fashion, elegance, and beauty, so dangerous to imaginations of eighteen. And why? Because she had an excellent heart and an excellent understanding, the result of lively parts, ingenuous innocence, and, above all, of a wise, unsophisticated education.

But the sound of the distant music and of the "many twinkling feet" penetrates into this apartment; and Henry is the first to remember their singular situation on this evening of gaiety and magnificence.

"My sweet one," said he, with his own gentle smile, "we have brought ourselves into an awkward situation enough; how are we to get back into the ball-room?"

"Caroline will help us," said she: "you go away first. Send Caroline to me, and I will come in again upon her arm."

"I suppose that will be best," rising most slowly and unwillingly; and he dragged himself, rather than walked, into the splendid dancing-room.

Selwyn had been anxiously watching for his return, or some signal from Flavia; but when Henry entered the room, he could scarcely believe he was the same man who had quitted it: his countenance seemed beautified; that expression can only give you an idea of the glow of happiness that shone, with a brightness and serenity almost divine, over every feature; care, anxiety, those dark troubled lines which marred his likeness, had vanished; the clouds had rolled away; the blue serene of heaven had settled there. What were all the cruel surmises and suspicions of Estcourt to him now? Lord George whispered in the ear of Flavia no longer;

the future was as one eternal sunshine; yet, with that strange avarice of happiness which belongs to melancholy and disappointed characters, it seemed as if Henry delayed imparting his felicity even to his best friend. Those who are rarely very happy—and that is perhaps the case with all characters of great sensibility—seem to have a dread of marring such exquisite moments by the addition of the simplest new circumstance; so Henry evaded Selwyn through a sort of fancy of this kind; and not observing the questioning, astonished eyes of his friend, merely went up to Caroline and said, "Go directly into the boudoir, my dear; you are wanted;" and then he walked quietly among the company, and performed the part of son of the house with an ease quite new to him: a sense of internal dignity and self-respect, which, though he well deserved to feel, he never before had felt, raising him at once to the place he so eminently deserved to occupy.

Selwyn looked at him with pleasure and surprise; he had always lamented a certain want of ease and dignity in the manners of his friend, and this metamorphosis was as agreeable as unaccountable.

Henry was soon engaged in dancing, whilst Estcourt looked on and marvelled. Was this the anxious, low-spirited Henry, whom the communications he had this night made were calculated to fill with the most distracting anxieties? Was it possible that this young man possessed, after all, so much courage and spirit as to resist and triumph, at this important moment, over the dark influences of his threatening fortune? to maintain so calm an exterior? such cheerfulness in his countenance, and a manner equally removed from depression of spirits, and from the exaggerated gaiety which is sometimes assumed to cover depression of spirits?

Estcourt was compelled to honour, in the sensitive Henry, a victory which his own *sinewy* cast of temper could scarcely have achieved.

Mean time Lord George was roaming about searching for his little favourite, his little love, as he called her to himself, in fond appropriation; for, in spite of all Flavia did or could say, he persisted in believing her to be his own. At last she appeared, leaning on the arm of Caroline, and how changed also! There was an ineffable softness, an eye downcast, a bending head, a slow stealing step, an air of diffidence, yet of content, which had succeeded to the gay vivacity of an hour ago. But neither did she seek Selwyn; she went to a distant corner of the room, and there sat down behind a knot of people, evidently wishing to escape observation.

A pang shot through the bosom of Lord George: he felt

that she was lost to him for ever. The instinct of love rarely deceives. He, however, pushed his way to her, and said, in a hurried voice—

"I am going away: good night!"

She lifted up her eyes, and saw his changed and fallen countenance.

"Going away so soon?"

"Is it not time? I see it all, Flavia. Forgive my vain hopes, my mad persecutions. I do not pretend to blame you; you have been in the same story throughout. God bless you!"

CHAPTER IX.

First got with guile, and then preserved with dread,
And after spent with pride and lavishness.—SPENSER.

It would appear that the evil auguries respecting the mining business, with which Mr. Estcourt had tormented Harry upon the evening of the ball, were not altogether so well founded as that gentleman's impressions usually were. Many months passed away, and things continued in a promising condition.

The engagement of Harry and Flavia was made public. The good old duchess sighed, but forbore to remonstrate. The mother was not so passive: she not only remonstrated, but stormed; not only argued, but railed.

She came up immediately to London, and spared no argument, good or bad, that might persuade or intimidate her daughter, but all in vain; Flavia's resolution was not to be shaken. Had the mother tried gentler means, the sufferings of this good little girl in resisting her will would have been greatly increased; but even this better mode would have failed to produce the desired effect: her affection for Henry she felt to be a worthy sentiment, and she was supported by a strong sense of right, in opposing the value of such a character as his, to the more brilliant advantages held out to her by a connection with others. The only revenge, therefore, that her mother could take upon Henry, for being the favoured object of the daughter's choice, was by the exercise of an authority committed to her under her husband's will.

By this will it was provided, that in case Flavia married

without her mother's consent, the disposition of the settlements should be entirely in her parent's power. That she should not, in that case, be considered as coming of age till she was twenty-five; and that during her minority the income she was to receive should be regulated by her mother's judgment. Vain provisions! as are too many of those through which beings, no longer taking a part in the changing affairs of this world, endeavour still to interfere in their regulation.

By these provisions, intended to act as some check upon the rashness of inexperienced youth, it came to pass, that a most admirable and judicious choice was punished instead of being rewarded; that a wise and virtuous man was not allowed to interfere, in the slightest degree, in the final destination of a very large property; and that a violent, narrow-minded, selfish woman held the welfare, as far as money was concerned, of two generations almost entirely in her power.

Yet, what shall we say? The intention of the father was excellent. To restrain, in some degree, the power of one he did not know, his child, by the experience of one he did know, his wife—or rather, that he thought he knew; for, blinded by his partiality, by the smiles of beauty, and the grace of fine manners, he did not discern the cold, selfish temper hidden under all these fascinating appearances. However, reflections apart, poor little Flavia was disappointed in her generous wish of rescuing Henry from those embarrassments in which, through the wilful blindness of Mr. Wilmington, it seemed that sooner or later the family must be involved. Nor could she, by making him master of her princely income, render him completely independent of such circumstances. A very moderate sum was to be allowed her till she came of age, and every farthing of her property was to be settled upon her children, to the total exclusion of her husband; the greatest part of it upon an eldest son, should she bear a son, and little insignificant portions allotted to younger children: thus rendering this large fortune as inefficient for the purposes of family happiness as a large fortune could possibly be made; for, without questioning the wisdom, or even the justice, of preserving a long line of eldest sons in long-established or very wealthy families, few, we should hope, in these days of reason rather than imagination, but perceive the barbarous inhumanity of portioning off younger children, and especially daughters, in a manner entirely inconsistent with their position and habits; entailing upon them thereby all the miseries of poverty and dependence, or all the inevitable meannesses of husband-hunting or place-hunting.

The marriage was also delayed by every possible obstacle being thrown in the way; but the happiness the young people found in each other, neither lawyers nor an unjust parent could destroy. The summer and the winter passed by in the interchange of a tenderness and confidence which compensated to Henry for the anxieties and sufferings created by the follies of others.

Mr. Wilmington in the mean time pursued his course of vanity undaunted; nay, at a pace accelerated by the brilliant good fortune, as he esteemed it, of his son. He was excessively proud of this engagement, and of the connection which it seemed distantly to open to him with that higher sphere of fashion to which his ambition was ever directed. Lizzy, partly jealous and partly proud of this new relationship, endeavoured to make her part in the general elevation good by a magnificence that caused a sensation even in London, where, perhaps, after all, it is not very difficult, with a little address and a superabundance of money, to "get on," as people say.

Lizzy was presented, and her dress upon that occasion was splendid: looped up with knots of emeralds and diamonds, and a stomacher "quite unique," according to the papers. Some of these emeralds and diamonds, it is true, were *hired:* even Mrs. Wilmington could not pretend to purchase all; but, as she managed matters, money enough went to jewellers and milliners to send more stock or more shares into the market.

Mrs. Wilmington, it must be confessed, looked beautiful in her court dress, and her beauty was remarked even in the galaxy of a birthday. People began to remember how they had met them abroad, and more than one noble personage found or formed an excuse to call. Mrs. Wilmington's dinners were celebrated for their splendour. Wit followed rank to her table, and illustrious men of genius might be found seated there. Even Estcourt was glad to obtain an invitation; Ude recommended a cook; a butler and a housekeeper were provided from some aristocratic establishment, whence they had been civilly dismissed with well-filled pockets and more than suspicion of peculation, and were but too happy to save the elegant Mrs. Wilmington from the contamination of vulgar cares. The whole was wound up by a ball, so far excelling the one of the preceding year that it was declared to be *the* ball of the season.

It is not necessary to detail further the way that money went, nor need the anxieties and heart-bitterness of Henry and his sister be painted. July came; the display was at

last over. Mrs. Wilmington's visiting list was crowded with noble and fashionable names; but property to a large amount had been sold, and the mining speculation began to show symptoms of justifying the worst anticipations formed upon the subject. Immense dividends for eighteen months: dividends, alas! which had been spent as received, diminished by degrees. At last the crash came; disclosures the most iniquitous were made public, and in place of Mr. Craiglethorpe's hundred thousand pounds, a handful of transfers, that could be transferred to no one, was all that remained in Mr. Wilmington's hands, save what remained of his own private fortune, into the amount of which he dared not inquire.

CHAPTER X.

Though he his house of polished marble build,
Yet shall it ruin like the moth's frail cell,
Or sheds of reeds, which summer's heat repel.—SANDYS.

"A PRETTY affair that fine genius Wilmington has made of his Melwyn Mine," said Estcourt to Jones, one morning. "Purchas and Golding are flown—off—gone to America. We shall see my Lord Wilmington in the Fleet, after all."

"Pooh, pooh!" said Jones; "not so bad as that, we will hope. Henry has carried off the pretty Welsh heiress."

"Ay, ay, the young fellow has taken good care of himself."

"My father! where's my father?" cried Henry, rushing up stairs, with looks black as midnight. "Father! Mr. Wilmington!" opening hastily the door of every room in succession.

Mr. Wilmington was at last discovered in his dressing-room with his tailor, busily engaged in discussing the merits of a new waistcoat, in which he was to appear at my Lady T——'s fête at Richmond; a first invitation.

"Good heavens!" cried Henry, when he saw him thus engaged. "Good heaven, sir! father!"

"And so, Mr. Tibbs," continued Mr. Wilmington, to the spruce gentleman, who held a book of patterns in his hand; "and so, Mr. Tibbs, gold brocade will not do?"

"If I might be allowed to venture to dispute a taste so universally acknowledged to be just as Mr. Wilmington's, I should say this pattern was more the thing for a sort of *déjeûner*, which, after all, is the style of this fête, and more especially ——"

"Father," said Henry, "three words with you in private."

"Ten thousand, in ten minutes. Well, then, send in both; I will take the one I like best at the time; the fancy of the moment is everything with me. I wish you good morning, Mr. Tibbs."

"Good morning, sir!" and with due deliberation, folding up his patterns, the tailor left the coast clear for the agitated Henry.

"My dearest father!" he began.

"Well, my very good son? What the deuce, Henry must you be in such a hurry for? Surely your news may wait; post, post haste; what's the matter?"

"Oh! my dear sir, prepare yourself for the worst."

"Worst! worst? What worst?" impatiently. "What are you about, sir? Pale and red, pale and red, fifty times in a minute."

"It's all gone! It's all lost!" burst, at last, in a sort of shout from Henry's overcharged heart: and quite overcome, he sank back into a chair, and burst into a torrent of tears.

"What the d—l's in the poor lad?" said the father, touched by his emotion. "What's the matter, Harry?"

"Oh, father! oh, sir! the bubble has burst at last. All escaped; and Purchas and Golding are off to America. There will not be a sixpence; and the money! the money!"

Mr. Wilmington was sobered at last! The shock arrested him in the full intoxication of his vanity.

"You don't say so, Harry? And they talk of Craigie coming home," added he, in a low voice.

He looked very pale; he trembled at the thought; he was at heart very much afraid of the old man he had duped.

"But you know, Harry, it was at his own desire, and by his own consent, that I embarked in this capital scheme. What have the rascals been about? You know, Harry, Craigie ought to remember that any man may be duped by a set of rascals. Hey, Harry?"

"True," said his son; "but," recovering himself, he rose and laid his hand upon his father's arm: "you know, sir, the money must be replaced. You know it was entrusted to you upon your own representations, coloured by an imagination which saw advantages no one else could discern in this scheme. Had Mr. Craiglethorpe been aware of the precise state of the case, one cannot for a moment believe ——"

"Well, well, don't preach as if you were a methodist parson. Come to the point, like a man. What do you mean?"

"The money must be repaid," said Henry, steadily.

"Not a doubt of it, my dear fellow; every penny of it,

when old Craigie comes home. It is, after all, only a debt of honour; but I am a gentleman, sir."

"My beloved father!" and Henry, his whole countenance lighted up as with a sudden glory of joy, seized and kissed his father's hand with unspeakable emotion; the unspeakable joy of such a being as he was, on discovering in another a rectitude of principle which he had not dared to anticipate. No subterfuges, no vain excuses, no hesitations, no evasions. "Not a doubt of it, my dear fellow," his father had said; and Harry passed at once from the horrors of the most painful distrust to the ecstasies of security.

Mr. Wilmington guessed a little at what was passing in his son's mind. To estimate the depth and intensity of his feelings was far beyond him; but he saw the change, and with gratified vanity he continued—

"Could you for a moment think it possible, Harry, that your father would suffer himself to lie under monied obligations, even to his dearest friend? These are feelings, my lad, which only gentlemen understand. Not to be thought of for an instant. I would not condescend to be indebted in this manner even to my sovereign. Craigie is a good fellow; but I would not lie under such an obligation to him for the universe; hang me if I would!"

"My dear father, all you say is true; and common justice and honesty in this case will require sacrifices which no man will be more ready than myself, when the moment arrives, to make."

"Sacrifices! pshaw! No man despises these things more than myself. 'A crust of bread and a hollow tree.' How runs it, Harry? 'My mind to me a kingdom is.' I flatter myself no man on earth can bow to necessity more gracefully than I can. Ha, Harry! I have not studied philosophy in vain!"

"Sacrifices will be necessary," reiterated Henry. "We will hope much from a speedy retrenchment. The sum is large; but with your fortune, sir ——"

"Oh, pooh! do what you will. Make all the necessary retrenchments. Where shall we begin? Sell off the grays? ay, and get rid of the new purchase at Brighton? Lizzy must do without her marine villa this summer."

"I will, if you will give me leave, father. Just make a statement of your property, and we shall soon see what will be necessary to be done. I am delighted to see you take it so cheerfully, dear father."

"Ho, lad! when didst ever see thy father upset? Thou art not quite so tough; thy poor mother in thee. She was

always a bit of a whimperer, poor soul! But never mind, boy; thy father will find spirit for both. We'll dine at home to-day, and try the new Burgundy; and, nose and knees over the fire, we will have a set-to, and see what's to be done; for I shall think that I see old Craigie's weazened face grinning at me—an old hunks!—till he has got his precious bills back again."

There was not much time for preparation; but Henry sat down in his own room, and making a hasty memorandum of his father's scattered property, he proceeded to note down the retrenchments and sacrifices which would be necessary.

As the clock struck eight, he entered his father's dining-room with a sort of cheerful composure of face and manner, softened by something peculiarly tender as he addressed him. They were a mere family party; Lizzy in an elegant wrapper, preparatory to dressing for the evening; Caroline in a morning-dress on the same account.

Mr. Wilmington was in excellent spirits. He felt more than usually satisfied with himself; for, in spite of his vanity and conceit, genuine self-approbation was after all a rare feeling with him. There was something quite pleasant in the expression of his countenance as he sat opposite to his pretty young wife with his son by his side. Usually he was only occupied with her in these little family parties; but for once the son obtained all his attention; and it was a pleasing sight to see the two sitting together, talking in that low, confidential tone, though upon common topics, which is such a warrant of cordiality between near connections.

As for Henry, his whole heart seemed overflowing with affectionate reverence; while a tender consideration, springing from a secret sentiment of pity, displayed itself in all his actions. Fondest lover was never more attentive than he. The beautiful picture in Robinson Crusoe, when Friday discovers his long-lost father, was here reproduced in the different colours of a different life. Henry had, as it were, found a father. The choicest morsels were selected and pressed upon him; his glass was filled by his son's hand. Henry seemed jealous lest any one should serve his father but himself.

So overflows an excellent heart, when it thinks it has wronged another; so sweet a joy irradiates the angel over the sinner that repenteth. Mr. Wilmington sat leaning back in his chair, in rather an interesting attitude, as he thought, both expressive of thought and feeling, drinking in by large draughts this sweetest incense that he had ever perhaps received even in his flattered life.

"Well, Caroline," said the young wife, as she was about to finish her dessert, "these gentlemen have it all to themselves, have they not? However, when shall you be ready for Lady Methuen's ball, my dear Wilmington? I shall not be later than eleven; she is such an antiquated old thing, and hates late hours. Harry, my dear, when shall you be ready?"

"Harry and I don't go out to-night," said Mr. Wilmington, with an air of mysterious importance.

"La, now! why not? You positively must," smiled the wife. "Caroline, these naughty, idle creatures won't go out. Why don't you scold them?"

Caroline's eyes were fixed upon her father with an air of approbation and sympathy.

"Come, Miss Caroline," said the petted young lady; "do you hear, or do you not hear?"

"I hear," said Caroline.

"Well, are we to understand we are to go out alone? I hate that," said Lizzy, peevishly. "If I had thought you did not mean to escort us, I would have got somebody else. You must go, one of you; I can't and I won't go into a room, only two petticoats together!"

"My dear," said Mr. Wilmington, with a dignified air, "you must upon this occasion excuse me. Business of importance detains us at home; and I must beg, my love," continued he, "that when I say business of importance, I may meet with no difficulties. A wife ——"

"Business of importance!" (pouting); "a wife, indeed! Pretty consideration a wife gets!" (half aside). "Children are all in all here. I'll be bound Caroline knows what the mighty business of importance is: it is only a secret to me."

"It will very soon be no secret to any one, my dear madam," said Harry.

His father gave him a wink.

"No use publishing things," whispered he; "as well tell the whole town as her. I'll put her on another scent. My dear Lizzy, what can you care about law points and lawyers? Do let Harry's settlement be bothered out between us without putting your pretty fingers into such a fire."

Harry felt a disagreeable something creep all over him at this speech. Caroline cast down her eyes. These candid and honourable young people shrank with pain, even from an evasion.

"La! is that it? I wish we might ever come to an end of Harry's wedding! We shall be, all of us, sick of it, I foresee, before this fine heiress you make such a fuss about is

fairly housed; and I should not wonder if she gave you the slip, good folks, after all. 'Cup and the lip, many a slip.' Time enough for slips here. No one knows what may happen. Lord George is come back from Italy, I hear, so Master Harry had better look sharp;" and with a little ill-natured laugh she rose, and, followed by Caroline, left the room.

The blood gathered cold round Harry's heart. But he resisted the pain, or rather he ordered, he compressed it down, as it were, with the unflinching resolution of a martyr. This was no time to think of his own sacrifices. He rose, placed a comfortable chair by the fire for his father, a small table by its side, took the fresh bottle of the capital Burgundy, set it down there, with a couple of glasses, drew a small chair for himself by Mr. Wilmington's side, took a paper out of his pocket, and unfolding it, fixed his eye with the kindest interest upon his father's face, and thus began:—

"I am afraid, my dear sir, you will be somewhat shocked and disappointed, as I was at first, at the result of this statement; but your noble, honourable feelings, my dear father, will support you, and would support you under sacrifices far greater than, I trust, you will be called upon to make."

"Let's see, boy. Never fear me. One stroke of my pen, and it's done. What's property to honour? Trash! stuff! 'Twas mine, 'tis yours.' What says the poet? Ha, Harry! Not quite forgot my Shakspere, nor my Virgil; '*ridertes*—' what is it?"

"I have on this side," pursued Harry, "made a short estimate of all the property that I believe you are now possessed of. It will be lucky, my dear sir," with a faint laugh, "if you can correct me here, and add a few items; for I am afraid we shall find ourselves rather short."

Mr. Wilmington ran his eye hastily to the bottom of the page, then turned the leaf, but at next page a blank! There was nothing more. "Ninety-eight thousand pounds!" said he.

He then began leisurely to peruse the several items as they stood in the list, breathing, "Pooh! nonsense! You have forgotten half."

Harry's eyes were fixed upon his father, anxiously waiting for something more.

"And the villa at Brighton?" began Wilmington.

"Not paid for. The purchase is not completed," said Harry.

"Pooh! but it shall be completed. I am to give six thousand pounds for it. I'll bet you fifty to one I sell the next day for ten."

Harry shook his head.

"You don't mean to say I shan't. Pooh! it's impossible you can have got half down here. Ninety-eight thousand pounds! Why, I'm worth at least two hundred and fifty."

"Where?" said his son.

"Nonsense! where! I know I am. Why, those rascals Estcourt and Jones paid me down ninety thousand on the nail; didn't they?"

"Yes, sir; it was paid to your account at your banker's."

"And, you idiot! the balance at my banker's is never noted."

"The balance is against you, sir."

"Impossible! won't believe it! some error; some gross error! What the deuce! you don't mean to say I have spent ninety thousand pounds in eighteen months? Why, I have hardly spent so many hundreds. What's the use of making the worst of things, as you invariably do, Harry? What's the use, I say?"

"There was a large balance against you when that money was paid in; then there was that purchase you made in Devonshire, sir. I am afraid there will be a considerable loss upon it. I have put down the value as at thirty thousand, you see; I fear it will not fetch more; it was a fancy purchase, sir."

"Fancy! no fancy. I gave fifty thousand for it, I know; and are these all the shares I possess in the Y. and G.?"

"I fear so."

"I don't believe a word of your account, sir."

"My dearest father, consider! What is there to be added?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. But please then to tell me what I am to do."

"You are prepared to make great sacrifices," began Henry, "father, you said ——"

"What the deuce matters it what I said? Do you think I expected to see my property chopped, and snipped, and cut to nothing by your d—d way of calculating? Look now, this very house in which we are now sitting, you have put it down at fifteen thousand pounds. Pshaw! as if it were not as well worth twenty-five thousand pounds as twenty-five copper farthings."

"It will be all the better if it prove so."

"Prove so! Why, you don't think I'm going to sell my house; do you? Are you stark mad, Harry? Sell my house, indeed!"

"This house, sir, is so very expensive a one, that I thought you would think it better to dispose of it at once. Perhaps the one at Roehampton may, with a prudent economy, yet be retained," said Henry, in a deprecating tone.

"Retained! Bless your soul! why, you don't think I'm going to sell *that* too? And what am I to do for a town house, pray? Go into Russell Square, I suppose? Catch me doing that! A pretty feeling you have for your father! I ask him to arrange some plan of rational retrenchment for me, and the first thing the blockhead proposes is to turn me into the street. But I'll see old Craigie and his hundred thousand pounds at Old Nick first! What business had he to push me into that d—d concern? If he had not been so ready lending his confounded money, I should not have thought of it. Extravagant nonsense! Romantic, ridiculous stuff! Turn myself into the street, indeed!"

Henry sat leaning forward, his eyes with an expression of sad dismay continuing fixed upon his father.

"The money must be paid, you know, father," he reiterated.

"I know that as well as you do yourself, and it shall be paid. You need not bother yourself about that; mighty easy to be so ready with other people's money. Not much matter to Master Harry what becomes of the rest of us; he's got the Welsh heiress."

"But then, how do you propose to do it?" said Harry, sticking to his point, and despising the taunt.

"By degrees," said his father, "as any one but a ninny would advise, one should think. I shall make retrenchments; I shall sell that villa at Brighton; I told you I would, and the property in Devonshire—an expensive whim enough of Lizzy's: that will be sixty thousand of the money at least. Then she must lay down her phaëton, and content herself with a pair of horses to her carriage; and Caroline must give up her riding-horse and her own groom; she can ride that bay filly of mine when she wants to go out, and Sanders can ride out with her when I don't want him to attend upon myself: and you, Master Harry, as you are so fond of retrenchments, let us see what you mean to do."

"I sent my horses to Tattersall's this morning," said Henry, "and I have paid off Charles. I shall want nothing, sir, absolutely nothing. Father—excuse me for saying so

—I could accept of nothing from you until this money was repaid."

"Mighty fine, Mr. Philosopher! You mean to starve, then?"

"I mean to sit at your table, sir, as long as you and Lizzy will allow me a chair there," said Henry.

"Very well; so be it. Then, as for Craigie, they may talk, but I know him; he'll not be coming home yet a while, depend upon it: something may turn up between this and then. In the mean time, let us do all that a reasonable being can require; sell the two properties, and pay him what we can."

Henry sank back upon the chair; his eyes were bent upon the floor; a few moments he paused and reflected; a few moments he hesitated; then he lifted up his eyes again and said seriously—

"I should be unworthy to be called your son if I did not, however painful, remonstrate, where remonstrance is my first and strongest duty. Forgive me, sir! This conversation must not end so, something more must be done on your part to avert dishonour and ruin."

"My part! Why, am I not ready to make every sacrifice?"

"They must be made, sir, not talked of," said Henry. "This house must be sold; this establishment must be altogether broken up. It is plain now that the deceptive and exorbitant dividends drawn from that confounded mining bubble are at an end; that with an income such as now remains to you it would be perfectly preposterous to attempt to live in the style we have been living in. Take courage, my dear father! Cut away boldly; cut deep enough. What are shilly-shally retrenchments in a case like this? Sell this house, sell the one at Roehampton; keep your Devonshire estate; let us go down there; let us have done at once with parade and deception. A couple of thousands a-year, which I trust may yet remain to you, will command all that is necessary for happiness."

"I tell you I can't, and I won't, then," cried Mr. Wilmington, rising angrily, to put an end to a conference which was getting too hard for him. "I tell you, I'd rather be dead at once than live like a country parson on a paltry two thousand a-year, in a confounded country place, where there was not a soul to speak to, nor one rational thing on earth to do. You're talking nonsense. It's all very fine for you; but I'm master still in my own house, thank heaven! and not to be schooled by my own son. Do you think I am no judge of

what's necessary to be done? As good a one, at least, as a poor pitiful fellow who knows nothing of life or its demands, and never will know anything of it while he breathes; no, nor of the indispensable requirements of a gentlemen and a man of spirit. Never you heed, Master Henry! I'll take care of myself, thank you! and pay old Craigie too—make yourself sure of that. And here comes the newspaper; so let's have done quarrelling for one while."

Henry rose from his chair, walked to the window, and stood there lost in perplexed and melancholy thought; that sort of despondency seizing upon his spirits, always too tender for the task in life appointed him, which besets the stoutest hearts, when, suddenly disappointed in the expectations they had founded upon the character of another, they find themselves launched upon a sea of troubles, without polar star or compass to guide them.

Two or three times he turned his head, and looked wistfully at his father; but his father, holding the newspaper extended before his face, his knees negligently crossed, was lolling in his chair, apparently as much at ease as if there were neither debt nor difficulty in the world. This way of getting through difficulties by resolutely shutting his eyes upon them had stood him in such good stead through the course of his fortunate life, that it was become a fatal and inveterate habit, which the struggle with real difficulty had never tended to correct. Mr. Wilmington had, till now, always found the means, though at a heavy future cost, of disengaging himself from present embarrassment without personal sacrifice. He could not be persuaded but that it might be done now.

We are none of us, perhaps, sufficiently grateful for the discipline of circumstances; for the immediate punishment, in the shape of disappointment or difficulty, which waits upon our weaknesses and errors. Fatal security, into which the favourites of fortune too often fall! Fatal obstinacy in error, which results from unpunished wrong! "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Life furnishes a solemn commentary for the text, which ought to make the prosperous tremble, and awe them into circumspection.

Mr. Wilmington was roused for a moment from his newspaper by the noise of the door shutting after Henry as he left the room. He looked up, changed his left knee to his right, and went on with his reading.

Henry went up stairs. He knocked at Caroline's dressing-room door.

"Are you there, my Caroline?"

"Yes," answered Caroline, rising and opening the door. She started at his pale countenance. "What is the matter, dearest Henry?"

"I am come to gather courage; to take breath for a moment with you, my sister, before I proceed in that which must be done. You know," sitting down and gasping rather than breathing, "that the Melwyn mining speculation has failed, and we are, or we ought to be, ruined."

"And what does my father intend to do?"

"I don't know, Caroline: I hope he will do justice; but let me, at all events, do my duty. I must break with Flavia."

"With Flavia, my brother!"

"Whatever my father may at this moment decide upon, one thing is plain: he is eventually a ruined man. My dear, I speak without disguise to you. He wants courage, I see, to break through old habits; to retrench expenses, before it is too late, which it is now impossible he should be able to afford. A few months more or less, what matters it? But I will not betray her generous confidence. Flavia shall not enter a ruined family; shall not be the dupe of her own generous heart. I am going to her this evening; I would rather be the first to tell her. My Caroline! my only friend! say God speed you, and give you courage!"

Caroline was for a moment overcome; then she took her brother's hand and pressed it.

"You do right, Henry; God speed you, indeed! Come back to me when all is over."

She came in. She was in a simple white evening dress; her fair hair in a sort of sweet, careless disorder of long ringlets hanging round her face and neck, and shading her soft blue eyes; a blue sash round her tiny waist; a blue ribbon round her throat. She came in smiling. An angel vision of loveliness to his soul she appeared.

"Well, my dear Henry, what did you want to say to me? I have laid down my hand at piquet to attend your summons, sir. Very dutiful, am I not? But what's the matter, Henry? Dear Henry! how dreadfully pale, how undone you look!"

He did not speak: he took her hand, and perused, as poor Ophelia, her face, rather than gazed upon it.

"Well, well! what is it, Henry?"

"You are, indeed, the sweetest, sweetest angel!"

"What is the matter?" earnestly. There was that in the deep, vehement tone with which he spoke those few words which went to her heart. "What is the matter, Henry?"

"You are the most adorable being that ever shone upon the idolatrous fancy of man, or ever broke his heart."

"Henry! Henry!" He had never in his life spoken to her in such a passionate manner before, for he was no vain flatterer, even in his tenderest moments.

"Did you send for me here," she said, looking surprised, "only to talk this nonsense? I had better go to my cards again."

"Forgive me, Flavia, or I shall die at your feet."

"I willingly forgive you, Henry; but yet I wonder you would offend and hurt me," she began.

But he turned from her rebuke, covered his face with his hands, took one or two hasty, passionate strides up and down the room, and then, his eyes staring out, his hair dashed from his face, with the aspect of one almost distracted rather than overwhelmed by suffering, he came up to her and said—

"Forgive me, Flavia! nay, forgive me! You must; you must! It is the last, last time, my idol! my love! my life! my sweetest, sweetest, sweetest treasure!—I must part with you."

And, as if his heart had broken in saying it, he sank upon a chair, covered his face with his hands, and tears in floods streamed over his fingers.

"Good heavens! Henry, what is all this about? Part? Part! what are you thinking of?"

He conquered his emotion: he felt ashamed of his weakness.

"I am a poor fellow, Flavia, quite unworthy of you in all ways. My love, I am a poor, poor creature—a fellow quite unworthy of you. You will do better; far better, I hope. My Flavia!" taking her hand, as she stood by him where he sat, "My love, oh! yet one moment. Angel! let me look one moment longer. My love, honour, duty, reason, justice, alike demand it. I must give you up, my life! my father is ruined!"

"I don't understand you," said she: and the hand he held became very cold.

"My love, those mines, of which I have often spoken to

you with anxiety. The agents have betrayed his confidence; the bubble, as I feared, has burst, and we are beggars."

She trembled, shivered, became very pale, withdrew her hand, took a chair, and sat down.

"Is there no hope that these matters may be set right?" said she.

"None," he replied, chilled, and, it must be owned, somewhat disappointed by the way in which she received his announcement.

"Your father must be ruined, and Caroline, and all of you?"

"All of us, Flavia," said he mournfully; "but luckily there is yet time, my love, to rescue you."

"And can nothing be done to save your father? Ruin, Henry, is a fearful, fearful thing. Do not give it up in this manner. Surely a man is not to suffer himself and his affairs to be utterly upset by a sudden misfortune. In wrecks of this sort, so immense as this, there must be waifs and strays. There must be fragments of a fortune like your father's sufficient to content a moderate man. Henry, tell me there is something left."

"I do not mean that there is absolutely nothing; that we are going actually to starve; but there is not a hope of its now ever being in my power to offer you, Flavia, what your friends ought to require, and what you so well deserve. I must give up that hope once so sweet to me. May you bless a more fortunate man!"

"You don't think, Henry, I am going to give up my engagement with you?"

"Indeed, my life, it must be thought of no more."

"My dear Henry! what on earth have your father's affairs and our engagement to do with each other? Was it that," rising and taking his hand and kissing it; "was it that, dear, dear Henry! which made you so unhappy? Never think it, my love! My mother, my friends —— Ah! yes, I see it; but they may tear me with wild horses, they shall never tear me from thee!" And she kissed his hand again. Sweet womanly token of love and reverence!

He looked up at her as she stood holding his hand, and the sweetest emotions of admiration and fondness succeeded to the bitter, racking, irritating feelings of the moment before.

"Nay, my sweet Flavia, you must not say so;" and the tears stood again in his eyes. "We must part; but God in heaven bless you, my darling, for the balm your words have

poured upon my heart! There is a sweetness even in this hour, my soul's idol! All you do is so sweet; even parting is sweetened."

"Oh! don't talk of it; don't think of it. I am your wife; your wife in the eye of heaven; your wife in the secret recesses of my own heart. I could as soon rend my heart in twain as sever it from you, Henry."

"But your mother, my love; your friends; my duty; my honour?"

"My mother must not, cannot, ought not to separate man and wife," said she, solemnly; "whom God has joined, as he has joined us, man cannot and must not sunder. Your honour, it is pledged to me, Henry. I do not, I never will release it. I will wait with patience, I will do all that propriety or your high feelings require. You shall have your own time; do in all else as you will; but I never, never will release you?"

The party Flavia had left up-stairs consisted only of the duchess, now a great invalid, and Flavia's mother, the Lady Margaret ——. Flavia's mother was a fine tall woman; had been extremely handsome, and had still great remains of her former handsomeness; for beauty we will not call it; we will not apply that divine word to anything so dependent upon form and colour as was the appearance of Lady Margaret ——: regular, well-proportioned features; finely-formed eyes; a figure which would have been elegant but for a certain formality which characterised it; a dress in the best taste, but starched; a composed, cold manner: such was the mother of the sweet, animated, unsophisticated Flavia.

The duchess and her little friend had, as she had said, been playing at piquet; and Flavia had laid down her cards, on being requested to speak for one moment with a person on business. Her mother had thereupon closed the last new novel, and in an indolent, lounging manner had taken up her daughter's hand.

There was a knock at the house door, a little bustle in the hall, and Lord George was ushered into the drawing-room.

"George! dear George!" cried the duchess.

"Lord George!" exclaimed the mother, rising and offering her hand.

He took the offered hand cordially; then drawing a chair to the fire, sat down by the two ladies.

"Where is Flavia?"

"She will be here in a moment," said the mother.

Lord George looked round the room, then took Lady Margaret's hand, and in a cautious, whispering sort of voice, began—

"My dear madam, I am sorry to be the bearer of ill news; but you ought to be informed without delay —— Mr. Wilmington is ruined."

"And his son?"

"Must be a beggar with his father. There is no settled property; nothing the young man can call his own. He may go to Australia, if he likes it, with his father: it is the only thing he can do."

"And Flavia?"

"Oh!" said Lord George, in a tone of pique, "no doubt she will be but too happy to be allowed to accompany them.

"But that she never, never shall do," said the mother. "I always expected something would turn out wrong. This absurd, provoking whim of hers! this low, preposterous attachment! a mere mercantile bubble all their pretended wealth! —so unworthy ——"

"It is a pity, no doubt," sighed the duchess; "but if their affairs be really in the state Lord George represents, Flavia is reasonable: she will give up an engagement productive only of distress to us all."

"Yes," said Lord George, "if she were not what she is; but, rely upon it, she will never break her faith; and young Wilmington is not fool enough to set her at liberty."

"He must; he shall ——" began the mother, warmly, when the door again opened and Flavia appeared.

She started on seeing Lord George, and was hastily retreating.

"Come in, my dear," said the duchess.

"Come in, child," said the mother; "it is only Lord George.

Flavia hesitated.

"Nay," said Lord George; "if you cannot sit five minutes in the same room with me, I am gone."

"For shame!" cried the irritable mother; "come in, and don't be such a simpleton. Who wanted to speak to you?"

Flavia coloured.

"A matter of business, mother."

"Pooh! Business which I am not to know a syllable of, no doubt."

"All—everything, but not just now."

"I see, I am in the way," said Lord George; "I had better be off."

"No," said the duchess; "stay a little, Flavia, my dear," holding out her hand, and looking kindly and compassionately upon her, "come and sit down by me."

She obeyed. The duchess continued to hold her small white hand between her two withered palms, pressing it from time to time most tenderly and kindly. Her aged heart yearned fondly to this pretty young creature, almost the last thing left on earth that she could love.

Old age, when benevolent, is the best, the kindest, the most indulgent thing in the world. To the long experience of years, to the exhausted imagination, the stifled feelings, the calm tranquillity of this still evening of life, the long, long experience of its woes and its storms, these tender creatures, exposed to all the buffets of passion and fortune, afford the saddest and most affecting spectacle. The duchess, who had long lost the faculty of tears herself, was melted to the heart by the quivering lips and dewy eye of her young favourite.

Lord George, too, saw something had moved her; and his heart beat rapidly as he looked at her, longing for an opportunity of communicating his intelligence, hoping, fearing, desiring what the consequence of this new turn of affairs might be. Would it release her? Had he yet a chance of obtaining the creature he so doted upon?

He felt that he ought to go, and leave to the ladies the task of communicating his intelligence; but he was vehement and self-willed, and had far more passion than delicacy. He chose to stay, rude and unfeeling as it was to pry into her sensations at such a moment; and his impatience would not suffer him long to wait.

"Will you tell her?" he said, in a low voice, to the mother.

The mother had some little feeling, and said, "Not now."

"If you won't, I will, then," said Lord George. It must be remembered they were cousins; such familiarity, such a rude breaking in upon the family confidence, would have been absolutely impossible under other circumstances.

"Better put it off till to-morrow," whispered Lady Margaret.

"I cannot live in the miserable uncertainty I am in," returned he. "I beseech you, tell her; let us hear what she will say."

"There is bad news abroad, Flavia," began the mother.

Flavia raised her eyes and looked at her.

"Lord George brings us very unpleasant rumours."

Her daughter still was silent, fixing her eyes gravely upon her face.

"The Wilmingtons ——"

"Are ruined," interrupted Lord George, abruptly, "as everybody thought they would be, ages ago. The fine fellow has had too much to do with that mining speculation. The bubble has burst; the others are off to America, and the dandy merchant will be in the King's Bench, it is said, shortly."

"I know it," said Flavia; "but it is not quite so bad as you say."

"You know it!" cried the mother. "How could you have heard it? and why on earth did you keep it to yourself?"

"I have but just heard it."

"And who the deuce could have told you?" cried Lord George.

"Henry Wilmington himself."

There was a pause.

"My dear, dear child!" said the duchess, again pressing her hand; "this is very painful news, I fear, for you."

"Of course it is, my dear madam. I am very sorry for it."

"Mighty cool!" thought Lord George to himself. His spirits rose immediately: he got up, placed himself on the sofa beside her; looked at her with his sweetest and tenderest expression of countenance.

"Sweet Flavia! you bear it like an angel," said he; "and perhaps, after all ——"

"No," said Flavia, "I don't bear it well at all. I have been crying about it, and could cry my heart out, if that would do any good."

"But it will do no good on earth," said he; "and you are a darling little philosopher in this as in other cases. And, oh!" whispering, "could you but make a philosopher of me!"

She moved a little nearer the duchess, looked seriously at him, and said—

"Sir!"

"My dear," said her mother, surprised in her turn, and not a little delighted at the composure of her daughter's manner, "you really do bear this like an angel. Then it was Mr. Henry Wilmington that begged to speak to you, I suppose; and ——"

"And to tell all, and take his leave for ever, as a man of honour ought," cried Lord George, his eyes sparkling.

"Yes," said Flavia.

"My darling child!" said the duchess, kissing her fondly; "how good you are!"

"Good, my dear madam?"

"You are quite an angel, Flavia," responded the mother. "I really do not know you. And so, all is happily over, thank heaven! and you are my child once more."

And she gave one of those sighs that possess such an unutterable expression of grief.

Lord George said nothing but "Thank God!" sighed, and endeavoured to take her hand. He bent his head downwards, as if to kiss it. There was real feeling in his behaviour now, and it touched her a little.

So she turned her eyes gravely to him, and said—

"You are under some mistake, Lord George."

"Have you not told us he came to release you?" asked the mother, rather peevishly. "What mistake can there be?"

"Yes," said Flavia, "he came to tell me the worst, and to release me from my engagement. But you do not think," turning her eyes upon the duchess, "I hope you do not think so ill of me, madam ——"

"My dear, under the circumstances ——" her grandmother began.

"Under the circumstances, no woman in her senses ——" interrupted the mother.

"Under the circumstances, such romantic absurdity would be impossible," broke in Lord George.

"Mother, I withstood your wishes in this matter. Perhaps I did wrong. But I must, indeed, have done wrong if I had resisted your wish upon light and childish grounds. Nothing has happened in the least to shake my confidence in Henry Wilmington's virtue and integrity. He has acted as he always acts: nobly, justly, disinterestedly. My dear madam," turning to the duchess again, "there is no foolish imprudence in this. I have enough for both. I shall adhere to my engagement."

The duchess pressed her hand in silence.

Lord George retreated a little distance from her, and fell back on the sofa, his eyes still fixed upon her, his face filled with an expression of the bitterest disappointment.

But the mother burst out—

"What inconceivable folly, nonsense, and obstinacy! Do you really imagine, can you be so stupidly perverse, as to believe, that I will suffer or hear of your continuing a rash engagement with a beggarly citizen, because, forsooth, you are a splendid heiress, and there is enough for *both?* I say

I have been fooled with this romantic stuff, unworthy of a boarding-school miss just in her teens, till I am sick. A homely, vulgar, ugly merchant's clerk, not worth a sou; neither manners, talents, personal advantages, birth, nor connexion; not even his dirty bank-bills his own. And, forsooth, because you have wealth enough for both! Preposterous nonsense! Because you are high-bred, high-born, rich, pleasing, you are to fling yourself at his head in this manner! I am ashamed of you, Flavia!"

Flavia coloured high, and looked imploringly at the duchess. Her eyes said—

"Do you, too, misconstrue me? Do you, too, see nothing in virtue and goodness that may weigh against beauty, rank, and wealth?"

"My dear child," said this excellent woman, "I do not wonder that your mother is worried about this affair. You should reflect well, Flavia."

"Reflect! No, she will never reflect; headstrong, fanciful, self-willed girl. Well! get along; go and be married to your precious bargain. Choose between him and me. I have done with you."

Flavia's colour faded and rose; she was pale, she was crimson; she seemed suffocating with words that before Lord George she did not like to utter. She looked once or twice at him, but he would not go; he kept his place, his eyes fixed upon her. He was a strange creature; his curiosity to hear what she would say just at present mastered his other feelings.

Her mother paused a little while, and seemed waiting for an answer; but Flavia continued silent. Nothing irritates and at once confounds an angry person like silence.

"Well, will you not condescend to speak to me? Have you nothing to say?" At last she broke forth.

"Nothing, mother."

"Do you mean me to understand that this romantic business is to come to an end or not?" imperiously.

"How can you, mamma"—at last she began to warm in her turn; "how can you, mamma, suppose I could be guilty of such a mean, contemptible, cruel action as to forsake a man to whom I was betrothed before God and man, because he has lost his money? I thought," with some indignation still in her tone, "I thought you, at least, madam," turning to the duchess, "had known me better."

"I beg your pardon, indeed, my love," was all the duchess could articulate.

But Lord George, who had remained motionless, leaning

back on the sofa, regarded her in gloomy silence, now started up; a beautiful radiance of love and admiration beamed upon his countenance.

"You are right, dear, sweet, blessed creature!" he cried, passionately catching both her hands, and pressing them to his lips and to his heart. "I will never, never, if I live a thousand years, plague you with a word or a look again. I vow to be your slave, your friend, your brother, as long as my heart shall throb within my breast. Farewell, my Flavia! Let me be your brother, your husband's friend; let me save you, watch for you, labour for you, pray for you: it is all I will ever ask;" and pressing her hands once more passionately to his heart, he let them fall, and left the room.

CHAPTER XI.

With such amazement as weak mothers use,
And frantic gesture, he receives the news.—WALLER.

THERE are periods in life when events succeed each other with almost breathless rapidity, and this was the case now.

The arrangement of Mr. Wilmington's affairs, or rather such retrenchments as his son could persuade him to adopt, were gradually carried into effect. The house at Roehampton, which he would not sell, he was prevailed upon to let, but the family remained still in Belgrave Square, not without sundry murmurings upon the part of Lizzy, who now discovered that it was impossible to exist without fresh air. Expenses still continued upon a large scale, and were maintained in the old way, by the sale, one after the other, of various odds and ends which still remained, and the proceeds of which melted away as fast as they were obtained. The first thing which seemed really to awaken Mr. Wilmington from this vain dream, and excite a serious feeling of uneasiness, was the report which gradually became more and more prevalent in the City, that Craiglethorpe of Calcutta was realising his large property, and was certainly coming home.

It was long before he could be brought to believe it; he could not, he would not believe it. Was there the slightest probability that such a measure should be in agitation and he never informed of it? Yet, in spite of all his declarations, he could not help looking upon this dreaded return, which he knew sooner or later must inevitably take place, something with that altered eye with which a man regards death, from the crowded scenes of pleasure and business, or from a sick bed.

This increase of anxiety, however, led him to take one other step in the way of retrenchment. He suffered himself to be prevailed upon by Henry to let the splendid house in Belgrave Square, and to adjourn to one in Upper Seymour Street; and, as the expectation of Mr. Craiglethorpe's return strengthened, as reports day by day became more frequent, Henry was able to persuade him into various other

little plans of economy, to which he had till now found it vain to call his attention.

So passed that winter, and again the spring drew on, and the cold March winds whistled along the streets, and the rains fell heavily, and all was cheerless without, and there was little comfort within.

Mrs. Wilmington, no longer kept in good humour by adulation and display, was full of nothing but peevish lamentations over her unfortunate fate. Such is it to acquire habits of expensive luxury; to enlarge the amount of things necessary; for how soon do luxuries cease to be sources of pleasure, and become mere necessaries, the possession of which gives no enjoyment, but the privation of which is a very positive pain!

How soon—sooner than they are themselves aware—do even the wise, unless they keep a heedful eye upon themselves, become entangled in the web of expensive habits! With fools to be so is a matter of course.

Lizzy, who before she married Mr. Wilmington would have thought a husband and a house in Upper Seymour Street a prize indeed, accustomed to Belgravia, mourned her hard lot unceasingly. She really felt it as a privation; there was no affectation in that; so did Mr. Wilmington, or would have done, had not his mind been occupied with a harassing sense of anxiety and terror at the idea of his friend's return. Even Caroline confessed to herself how easily she had accustomed herself to the expensive habits of her family; and it was some time before she could quite forget her roomy and lofty dressing-room and bed-chamber, which were now exchanged for a small apartment upon the upper floor. She smiled at her own weakness, and moralized much as I have done above; and she soon reconciled herself to the necessary privations; but she found it difficult to reconcile herself to Lizzy's worrying complaints and pettish humours. It was miserable work.

Henry was little at home. He was engaged the whole day in business connected with this unfortunate mining affair. Indefatigable in his endeavours to save something from the wreck for Mr. Craiglethorpe; indefatigable in his endeavours to restrain his father, wasteful even in what he thought economy. Flavia he was separated from; her mother had carried her down to Wales, and forbade her to receive his visits. However, the next year she would be of age, and able to assert her right of choice; and in the mean time they corresponded, and her letters sweetened many a heavy hour.

Henry fully believed in the report of Mr. Craiglethorpe's speedy return, but this added nothing to *his* anxiety. It was not the dread of facing him, but the dread of wronging him, that preyed upon his mind.

He had found it impossible to persuade his father to write a correct statement of what had occurred to his friend. Wilmington always put it off upon the plea that till the mining business was wound up it would be impossible to tell how much money might be rescued from the wreck, or for how much Mr. Craiglethorpe would have to come upon his (Wilmington's) private fortune, which he persisted in believing to be fully equal to any probable demand. But both Henry and he knew better; and whilst the one trembled in secret at the idea of being called to account, the other felt relieved by the idea that the worst would soon be known. Nay, he was actually impatient for Mr. Craiglethorpe to arrive, in order that he might seize for himself such portions of the wreck of Mr. Wilmington's fortune as Henry found himself powerless to secure for him.

Nothing of all this had he communicated to Selwyn; for the first time there had been a reserve to his friend. It is true, Selwyn was aware that the mining speculation had failed, and that there would be a large sum due to his uncle, which it would a good deal embarrass Mr. Wilmington to pay; and he had made the most liberal offers of assistance, but these Henry had peremptorily rejected. He felt it would be but to increase the injury already inflicted, to suffer any use to be made of Selwyn's money.

The fear that these offers should be made to Mr. Wilmington, that his father should become acquainted with and accept them, now sealed Henry's lips. Hour after hour he passed with his friend, his spirits worried with vexation and anxiety; but he persevered in his resolution, and the consolation of confidence was forbidden him.

The winter brought with it additional sources of distress, in the rapidly increasing decline of Selwyn. He became always much worse towards the beginning of February, and now it was March, and he appeared sinking fast into the grave.

Sickness seems to extinguish the love of life, and the victim of consumption, drinking death, as it were, by slow degrees, becomes insensibly reconciled to the bitter draught. One by one, the prospects of youth and happiness had melted away; the visions of this world had faded before his closing eyes, and better and fairer began to succeed.

The world to come began to assume the form of the actual

and the real; the present world to float around him like an uncertain dream.

Much they talked of death; much they speculated upon that unseen and infinite to which the one was rapidly verging, whilst the other remained to struggle on with the painful obstructions of this material life. The one about to depart was calm, serene, and peaceful. Undying hope, awe-struck but tender aspirations after a greater good, a wider wisdom, a better life, spent in more intimate communion with the One great, the One benevolent, the One wise, opened before him; but the other was agitated and full of sorrow.

He who has first to tread the dark path from which human nature shrinks back with horror, consoled and strengthened him who was to remain. The attachment which Henry felt for his friend assumed almost a character of enthusiastic admiration during these last few weeks.

At last the news so much dreaded by the father was confirmed. The intelligence arrived overland, that Mr. Craiglethorpe had realised his property, and had actually sailed in the "Sumatra" on the 21st of December: he might be expected to arrive in England about June.

These were days before steamers had rendered the passage by the Red Sea an ordinary one. At this period, no one, except a special messenger now and then, or, still more seldom, an adventurous traveller, made the transit overland, as it is called. Mr. Craiglethorpe, of course, came round by the Cape, about a six months' business in a sailing-vessel.

When the fact could no longer be disputed, Mr. Wilmington did at last begin to feel all and more of the racking and irritating anxiety which he had been so often the cause of inflicting upon others. As there had been no bounds to his restless defiance of consequences, no limits to his almost audacious confidence in his own good luck and disregard of the future; as no description can do justice to the insane determination with which he resisted the evidence before him, and resolutely shut his eyes against what was certain to come, so there seemed no limits, no description can do justice, to the miserable, degrading terrors with which he was seized, when first he was forced to realise to himself that the hour for calling him to account was actually approaching, and that the man would shortly appear whom he had affected to laugh at and trifle with at a distance, but whom he dreaded beyond measure to meet.

He could no longer delude himself with the excuses he had made to Harry, and with which he had silenced certain misgivings of his own heart: that Mr. Craiglethorpe had had

due warning; that the money had been invested at his own request, and so on. Now he felt, as strongly as Harry had ever done, that this confidence was granted upon his own representations, and his representations alone; and he knew far better than Harry did—far more than Harry, happily for himself, had even suspected—how exaggerated, how unwarrantably, how intentionally false, those representations had been. True, he had been most sanguine as to the success of the undertaking; but how came he not to adhere to truth in his account of it to the man who had trusted him? And now that man was coming home. He knew him well; he knew that he had the eye of a lynx where interest was concerned; that it would be vain to attempt to throw dust in his eyes; that he would detect every subterfuge, unmask every misrepresentation, and that he would be enraged beyond measure at the loss of his money. Craiglethorpe, robbed of his money, would be as the lioness deprived of her whelps: he would be without mercy.

Whether in the extravagance of his terror Mr. Wilmington did not now exaggerate these dispositions in his friend may be doubted; as far as Harry and Caroline could recollect of him, he did not seem altogether so hard and mercenary as their father seemed to think; but it was impossible to look forward without awe to the approaching meeting.

One good consequence, however, resulted from this agony of terror. Mr. Wilmington became as anxious to spare as he had been till now greedy to spend. He gave up even the house in Upper Seymour Street, and retired to a still smaller one. He sold his carriages and horses; he advertised his house at Roehampton, and the other in Belgrave Square, for sale. He was now in danger of sacrificing valuable property in his nervous impatience to realise. These hasty measures impaired his credit; tradesmen again became importunate; money was with difficulty obtained; and the unhappy man was kept in a perfect fever of agitation, enduring the torture of the Danaïdes in the contemplation of that banker's book into which he was continually pouring something or other, vainly hoping to have a good sum ready against Mr. Craiglethorpe's arrival, but which the imperious demands of to-day were as rapidly emptying.

The end of March came; it was the 26th.

April, May, June. Twelve or fourteen weeks at most and the "Sumatra" must be in the river. She was a splendid vessel, celebrated for her fast sailing. Mr. Craiglethorpe, it was said, had all his fortune on board with him, except what he had transmitted to Mr. Wilmington.

But what mattered that, or how large his possessions might be? Men are not the more indifferent to the loss of one hundred thousand pounds because they have in their coffers thrice the sum. Wilmington knew the world well enough to be assured of that. The description of Craiglethorpe's wealth only swelled to his imagination the weight of that power which was steadily advancing to crush him.

This 26th of March was a wretched, wretched day. It opened with a black, bleak, miserable morning, upon a sufficiently uncomfortable company, now assembled at breakfast at Mr. Wilmington's.

The small room was very cold in spite of the fire, which, to tell the truth, was behaving as fires will do upon these black, bleak days; it would not blaze; it looked as cold and comfortless as the sky. Lizzy, in a horrible ill-humour and very slovenly half-dressing-gown sort of wrap, was pouring out the tea. Caroline was cutting bread and butter for her father, who, sitting by the fire in a sulky, disconsolate sort of mood, made no reply to his wife's fretful—

"Mr. Wilmington, breakfast is ready. Mr. Wilmington, I declare you keep all the fire from one. Caroline, I really think you might take your turn in making tea sometimes. I declare I'm frozen to death. Henry! Oh, he's not here! Will nobody stir that fire? Henry! Oh! here you come; always late. I declare it's too bad to be kept here waiting by everybody. Caroline, I do think you ought to make breakfast sometimes."

"I will do it readily at any time, Lizzy. But you never seemed to like that I should. Shall I pour out Henry's tea now, whilst you go to the fire?"

"It's no use going to such a fire as that. Mr. Wilmington! Henry! *will* you give it a stir?"

Mr. Wilmington, upon this, in an abrupt manner, gave the fire a poke, which drove all the black coals into the expiring red; and, turning his pale, anxious, care-worn face to Henry, said—

"What time do you start?"

"The first coach goes at eleven, the second at two. I think I had better take the first; no time should be lost."

"By all means take the first. If anything is yet to be done, for the love of heaven don't let it slip, Harry!"

"You may be sure I will do my best, sir," answered the son, cheerfully. "You really don't look well, father," said he, coming up to him with his usual kindness; "I am afraid you have had a bad night."

Mr. Wilmington shook his head.

"Middling," he said; "but Harry ——" and, drawing his son towards him, he whispered in his ear.

"Never fear, sir; never fear," was the cheering reply; "don't be discouraged: now we have once heartily put our shoulders to the wheel we shall yet drag the carriage through, never fear. It will be something," looking cheerfully round the little apartment, "to have you found living here."

Mr. Wilmington sighed. He could not take that comfort in these mortifying privations which his children did. He looked rueful, and began again to stir the fire.

"Will you never have done with that horrid noise?" cried Lizzy; "besides, do come to breakfast. See, there is a heap of letters for you both; and here—here's the newspaper just come in."

"That fellow never will learn to dry it," said Mr. Wilmington, lazily unfolding it, and spreading it before the now somewhat recovering fire.

He seemed obstinate about his breakfast, as if on purpose to provoke his wife. He began to read the newspaper, while she fretted almost aloud, like a child.

He never minded her in the least; he seemed to take a pleasure in being tiresome; he read on, yet he read lazily, as if it was not for the pleasure of reading, but of being provoking, that he read. The fire began to blaze; that was one thing, and its warmth was comfortable to his dull spirits. Henry went on with his breakfast; Caroline and he talked in a low voice together. Something concerning these mines demanded his immediate presence in Cornwall; he was about to start that morning. They were consulting how she was to send him his letters, and about his impatience not to be long away from Selwyn.

The fire blazed; Mrs. Wilmington pouted; Mr. Wilmington turned the paper idly about. Suddenly his eye caught something; a paragraph. He stooped down, reading it as if he would devour it; he bent it to the fire as if he would see it by that light; then he gathered the paper up and crushed it into his pocket, and starting up made as if he would run out of the room; he then sat down again and panted as if for breath; then he pulled out the paper again; again bent down to the fire, and read or rather devoured the passage.

"What in the world is the matter now?" said Lizzy, who had been watching him.

At this his two children looked up.

He was pale with emotion, but it was not the emotion of grief: every feature was working with agitation. Again he

crumpled up the paper into his pocket, and looked quite bewildered, almost as if he were beside himself. It certainly was not sorrow; it hardly seemed joy; what was it?

"My dear father ——" said Caroline.

"For goodness' sake, Mr. Wilmington, what can be the reason of these unaccountable ways? Are you going crazy?" exclaimed his wife.

"My dear sir, what *is* the matter?" asked Harry, coming up to him anxiously, as soon as he was aware of the state he was in; "what can have happened?"

"Harry! Harry, my boy! my boy! read it yourself; read it yourself!" was all he could articulate, taking the newspaper out of his pocket again, and putting it into his hand.

Henry unfolded the paper and searched about, but saw nothing.

"I find nothing, sir; where is it? what is it?" he said.

"Give it me!" He was panting violently; his hand shook as he took the paper again; he found the paragraph with difficulty, and his shaking finger pointed it out to his son.

"It is with regret that we have to announce that advices have been last evening received at the India House, announcing that that noble East Indiaman, the 'Sumatra,' which sailed from Calcutta the 4th of September last, was struck by lightning and perished in a terrific storm off the north-east point of Madagascar, lat. 15°, long. 45°, on the 10th of October last. Advices have been received from the Cape which leave no doubt of the deplorable catastrophe. We lament to say that every soul on board perished, except the mate and two seamen, who escaped by a miracle. The particulars in our next. Names of passengers on board:—

"Henry Wilson, Esq. Mrs. Wilson, and four children.

"Mrs. James Murray and child.

"Mr. Fisher and son, and servant.

"Mr. Craiglethorpe, of Calcutta, and two servants," &c.

"Good God!" was all that Harry could say. He was excessively shocked. He was even the more shocked from the horrid feeling of relief which the disastrous intelligence forced upon him, and which was but too visible upon his father's agitated countenance. Yes, it was joy, terrible joy, joy inexpressible, which his son could not help reading there.

Harry handed the paper to Caroline; Lizzy got up in a hurry, and read over her shoulder.

"Well, that is strange," said she. All the rest were silent. Harry at last took up the paper.

"It is, perhaps, after all, only a newspaper report."

"Ha!" said Wilmington; "who's hand is that?"

"Fergusson's," naming an India director. He broke the seal.

"*Leadenhall Street.*

"DEAR WILMINGTON—It is with extreme regret that I have to inform you of the awful disaster which has befallen one of our finest vessels, the 'Sumatra,' off the north-east coast of Madagascar; struck by lightning in a thunder-storm, on the 10th of October last; gone to the bottom, and, with the exception of three, every soul on board perished. Of course you are aware that poor Craiglethorpe was on board. I condole with you on the loss of so valuable a friend. Poor fellow! singular to the last; the most part, if not all, of his immense wealth, it is said in bullion, on board—chose to bring it home that way—all gone to the bottom. It is a dreadful business; nothing but desolation around us here; everybody coming to inquire for a friend or relation. Poor Wilson, and that sweet wife of his, and his three children, coming home to be happy; and Fisher, and that prepossessing fellow, his son. It is a frightful business. The loss in property incalculable. In haste.

"Yours faithfully,

"T. FERGUSSON.

"P.S.—Poor Craiglethorpe had a nephew, I think; I do not know him, nor do any of us, but have heard he is in a bad state of health. I think I have heard you speak of him as your friend; will you take means that he should have this grievous news broken to him before he reads it in the newspapers? It will be in the morning papers of to-morrow."

"How comes it! This letter ought to have been delivered last night, but I hope it is not too late. I will hasten to Selwyn," cried Henry. "My dear father, I cannot lose a moment: there are a few other directions to take; a matter or two to talk over before I leave town, which I shall not do now till the last coach at two. Call in Portugal Street, will you? and let me speak a few words to you; don't be later than one, sir, if you please. Caroline, let William take my things to the coach, for that which starts by two. Good-bye; I shall not see you again for a few days, maybe a week. Farewell, Lizzy!" and he was off, clapping his hat upon his head, and carrying his great coat upon his arm.

CHAPTER XII.

There is a Reaper, whose name is Death,
And with his sickle keen
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.—LONGFELLOW.

HE hastened to Portugal Street, in which quiet street Selwyn had lately taken up his residence. He lived in a large, roomy, but somewhat gloomy house, for that street is singularly secluded and quiet for so animated a part of the town; but this was what he loved.

Henry ran rather than walked, in his anxiety to spare his friend the shock of first seeing his uncle's death in the newspaper; and as Charles, Selwyn's old man-servant, opened the door in answer to his hasty knock, he cried—

"Has your master had this morning's paper?"

"Oh dear, no, sir!" answered poor Charles, sadly; "here it lies upon the hall slab; I quite forgot it. Poor master has had an awful night; I was just about to run for you, sir; but he seems a little better now."

"Good heavens! you don't say so! What's the matter? how was it all? Has he been hearing any bad news?"

"No, sir. He went quite quiet to bed, and was merrier than I've seen him of late, sir; and laughed, and chatted as I put him to rights; and 'Charles,' says he, 'I would not, for much, that folks knew what a capital nurse you make me; as sure as you're alive, you'd be nicknamed the old woman.' 'Nicknamed or not, all one to me, so as I give you satisfaction, sir,' says I; but he went on joking so that it did my heart good to hear him. And then, in the middle of the night, mixing with a dream as it were, tinkle, tinkle goes a bell; and at last louder and louder, till, half-awake, half-asleep, I starts up, and it's master's bell: I run to him, and, oh, but he was desperate ill! Mrs. Lomax was called, and was with him the best part of the night; and we sent for Mr. Greene; but he would not let us send for Dr. Horris: he said Mr. Greene could do all that could be done."

"How is he now? Can I see him? Be sure you don't let him see to-day's paper."

"He's quiet now, but very much exhausted; but he's not asleep. See him? He's always glad to see you, sir, be he how he may; the sight of you would be a cordial to him. Won't you walk up stairs?"

Henry went up, and entered his poor friend's room. He was in bed, looking wretchedly exhausted, but quite calm and composed; the medical man had not yet left him.

The two friends exchanged greetings in a subdued voice; Selwyn spoke with difficulty from extreme weakness, Henry from suppressed emotion. He was dreadfully shocked at the change which had taken place. In spite of what Charles had related, he could not help looking anxiously into Selwyn's face, to discover whether, by some accident or other, the fatal news had not been revealed to him; but the composure of Selwyn's countenance assured him this was yet to be done.

That it must not be done at this moment was but too evident; and Henry was confirmed in this opinion by a few words which he exchanged with the surgeon, whom he followed out of the room.

"This has been a terrible attack. How is he?"

The paroxysm had subsided, and with less alarming consequences than might have been anticipated. The surgeon told him no immediate danger was to be apprehended, and he would probably become much as he had been yesterday, provided always that he could be kept perfectly quiet; the slightest agitation might produce the most disastrous consequences. He entreated Mr. Wilmington not to converse with him, nor suffer him even to speak more than was absolutely necessary.

Henry returned to the sick man's room considerably relieved. When the door closed, Selwyn drew the curtain of his bed a little back, and signed to Henry to sit down upon the chair by his bedside.

He spoke very low as he said, "You are going into Cornwall to-day?"

"I must; there is an appointment it is absolutely necessary that I should keep."

"To be sure, Harry, it is indispensable; I know it; but come back as soon as you can."

"I shall travel day and night. Unless something very unforeseen happen, I shall be back with you next Thursday."

"Thursday; that won't quite do. There is something I want done about poor Mrs. Seaton's business: you know what

I mean. I put it all in train last night, and meant to send Charles early this morning. I feel too ill even to give him directions as to what he is to do; but you understand all about it. Do be so good, Harry, as to give him his orders before you start, and send him off to Blackwall immediately. I can't rest till the poor woman's business is done."

"Be easy, my dear fellow; it shall be done instantly. I will dispatch him at once; so do you turn round and go to sleep."

The sick man, relieved from that harassing anxiety which oppresses us when something important ought to be done, and bodily weakness renders it impossible for us to effect it, did as his friend desired, and turning round, composed himself to slumber.

Leaving him in this tranquil state, Henry stole gently out of the room, went down into the hall, summoned Charles, and carefully delivered his directions to him. Charles was already in possession of the necessary papers, which he said his master had sent him that morning to fetch out of a drawer in a bureau which stood in the dining-room. This drawer was now standing open, and some papers had fallen upon the floor; tossed out, as I believe, by Charles, as he looked for the packet he was directed to find, and which he, being hastily summoned by his master's bell, had forgotten in his hurry: the keys, too, were left hanging in the lock. This little disorder might have been observed by any one standing in the hall; but if Henry saw it, occupied as his mind then was, it escaped his attention. I believe, however, it left a vague picture on his memory, which was recollected years afterwards.

Henry talked some time with Charles, and then let him out himself, at the hall-door. Hurried, heated, and agitated as he was, the fresh air, raw and cold as it was, felt pleasant. He stood a second or two upon the steps, and watched the old servant down the street; he was then turning to re-enter the house, when he saw his father approaching. Anxious that Selwyn should not be disturbed by his knocking, he waited in order to let his father in; which he did, closing the door very cautiously, to avoid noise. The two gentlemen remained in the hall a short time, talking over the business in hand; then, telling his father that Selwyn was very indifferently that morning, he described in a few words the symptoms, which to Mr. Wilmington, more experienced in such matters than himself, appeared extremely alarming. He forbore, however, to express his opinion upon the matter, lest his son should be tempted to delay his journey.

Henry then ran up to Selwyn's room, again asking his father to step into the dining-room, and wait there till he came down again, saying he wished to say a few words more before he set out. He looked at his watch; it was half-past twelve. "I have only an hour to be with him," thought he.

Mr. Wilmington went into the dining-room, shutting the door very gently after him; and Harry, with light footsteps, ascended to his friend's bed-room.

The drawer full of papers was open, as I said; and Mr. Wilmington, seeing one or two upon the floor, employed himself in picking them up, in order to return them to their place. It was a drawer, as I told you, in a sort of bureau writing-table, at which poor Selwyn was accustomed to write, and where his pens, paper, and writing apparatus lay, just as he had left it the evening before. A half-finished letter, another signed and folded, but not put into the envelope, his seals and sealing-wax, all lay scattered about.

Mr. Wilmington picked up the papers. One of them was folded like a law paper. He had the curiosity to read the endorsement upon the back; when he had done so, he stood with it in his hand for some time, musing deeply; he then slowly walked to the door, shut it, and very quietly pushed the bolt.

Having done so, he opened the paper.

In the mean time, Harry, seated by the bedside of his friend, who still slumbered quietly, was employed in considering what was best to be done.

The business which called him from town was of so urgent and important a nature that it was impossible to postpone his journey. All he could do was what he had done: delay his departure till the last moment, in hope of an opportunity of speaking to Selwyn. To set out without breaking the intelligence he had to communicate to his friend, and expose him to a sudden shock, was now more than ever to be dreaded. Might he but awaken in time, this composing sleep would no doubt have refreshed and strengthened him so far as to render it perfectly safe to make the communication; but Selwyn slept on, and he dared not awaken him.

Time passed; the clock on the chimney-piece raised its little silver voice, and told of quarter after quarter. What should he do?

At last he concluded that the best thing to do would be to write and impart the intelligence as cautiously as he could

by letter. This was unsatisfactory, but better than leaving the matter to chance; so, pen and paper being in the room, he sat down, and as carefully and tenderly as this mode of conveying ill news would admit of, he related the tale of the unfortunate "Sumatra's" fate. As a further precaution, having sealed and directed this letter, he enclosed it in another to Charles, in which he desired him to deliver this letter as soon as his master seemed recovered enough to bear a little anxiety, but by no means whatever till then, as it contained distressing news; charging him upon no account whatever to let him see a newspaper till he had read the letter.

And now the clock struck its quarters again, and the last had expired; and Henry stood by the bed of his friend, and gazed upon his sleeping face for a few seconds, with that tenderness and affection which never face was formed to express like his; and then he stole softly out of the room, and went down-stairs.

As he ran down the last flight, however, with less precaution, the drawing-room door opened, and his father came out. Another of those impressions of the sense, which the intellect did not notice, but which the memory served afterwards to recall at the end of years, occurred again. He thought he heard the bolt of the drawing-room door drawn back.

There was a large clock in the hall, and Henry was shocked to find that the French clock in Selwyn's room was too late. He had not a moment to lose. Hastily bidding his father adieu, and telling him Selwyn was still asleep, and he had better not ask to see him, he caught up his hat and great-coat and ran out of the house.

He never saw poor Selwyn again. The poor fellow was seized with a fresh paroxysm in the course of the following night, and breathed his last during the ensuing day.

There was an abatement of suffering before he died, and he closed his eyes leaving the most affectionate messages with his housekeeper for his dear friend and his family. Indeed, his whole thoughts seemed occupied with them alone, and with anxiety lest Henry should suffer from the idea of having been absent at this moment.

He suggested every possible motive of consolation for a circumstance which he knew that Henry would so deeply regret; and thus he departed from the world, generous, gentle, full of consideration for others to the last, and went to that brighter, better life, where all that is good, and wise, and great shall be found face to face in the sensible presence of the ineffable Father, Creator, and Saviour of all.

CHAPTER XIII.

Let such honours
And funeral rites, as to his birth and virtues
Are due, be first performed.—DENHAM.

I SHALL not linger upon the next painful week, most painful both for Henry and Caroline. The blank occasioned in both their lives by the loss of Selwyn was greater than even they could have anticipated. He had been so completely a part of themselves; his sympathy in their anxieties, in their joys, and his affection for them, had been so youthful and fervent, that they both felt, now he had really vanished from among them, that life had been robbed of one of its sweetest charms, and a loss sustained that never could be repaired.

Henry felt this deeply, accepted lover though he was; but he probably felt it the more from the uncertainty that hung over his prospects. It is true, Mr. Craiglethorpe's death had relieved his father from a most urgent immediate danger, but it was only a reprieve. Selwyn, the direct heir of Mr. Craiglethorpe's property, was dead, and it seemed at present every one was in ignorance who the next heir might prove to be. Neither Selwyn nor Mr. Craiglethorpe had any near relations. No one appeared at present to put in a claim. Still, that a claim would be put in by some one or another before very long it seemed impossible to doubt; and then the sum, and not only the sum, but the interest accumulating since Mr. Craiglethorpe's death, would have to be refunded to some stranger, who would be probably in the hands of some griping lawyer, and utterly without personal indulgence.

With such a cloud hanging over his own and his father's prospects, Henry felt it impossible to allow Flavia to link her fate with his. The time was now rapidly approaching when she would be of age and entitled to decide for herself. But till something could be settled he was resolved not to entangle her fate with his own. These cruel anxieties and resolutions added a bitterness and irritation to his grief, which

rendered the week after Selwyn's death one of the darkest and most melancholy that he had yet known.

He shut himself up till the day of the funeral, and avoided being seen by any one. He was gloomy and hopeless; Caroline was sorrowful and greatly depressed.

The day of the funeral was a bleak, cold March day. Every object wore that sombre, that excessively dismal and gloomy hue which pervades London in weather such as this. Selwyn had left a paper addressed to Henry, containing directions for his funeral, and telling him that he had appointed him executor to his will, which would be found in the upper drawer in the bureau which stood in the dining-room.

So everything had been arranged as directed, the whole affair being conducted in a manner as simple and free from parade as possible. Mr. Wilmington and his son were the only mourners. Ever since Selwyn's death Mr. Wilmington had seemed unusually pre-occupied and absent. Quite contrary to his usual habits, he would sit musing in his chair, absorbed in his own thoughts, for long intervals of time; then, as if recollecting himself suddenly, begin to talk in a forced, unnatural manner.

Caroline and Henry were, to own the truth, rather gratified at this. They looked upon it as a tribute to the friends who were gone, which they had not expected from him. The feeling might be shown in rather a singular manner, but it *was* feeling, and they were content to reverence it as such.

The day of the funeral the father and son were to return together to Portugal Street, to meet Selwyn's solicitor, and open and read the will. But as they were turning down Cumberland Street, the funeral having been at the little rural church of Kingsbury, Mr. Wilmington suddenly stopped the carriage, and said—

"I don't feel well, Harry. I had better go home. It is not necessary that I should be present at the reading of a will from which I have nothing to expect. I think I have got a chill; it is horribly cold. Put me down at the corner of Seymour Street, and I will walk home."

"You do not look well, indeed, sir," said Henry; for the first time perceiving how extremely pale and nervous he seemed. "Let me take you to the door."

"No; put me down here. I shall be better for a walk; I am desperately cold."

He looked quite blue.

Harry persisted, but he was not to be persuaded. He

walked home, but with apparent difficulty; and when he reached his own house, was in so violent a shivering fit that Caroline and Lizzy, both frightened, insisted upon his going to bed, which he did; but he would not allow them to send for a doctor, declaring that wine-whey and a night's rest would set all right again.

Harry pursued his way to Portugal Street, and here he was met by Selwyn's solicitor. The will was found in the drawer where Selwyn had directed him to look for it, and where the solicitor had himself seen it deposited, when it was finally executed some six months or so ago. It was opened and read: by it, the bulk of his fortune was bequeathed to his uncle, Mr. Craiglethorpe; twenty thousand pounds to Harry, ten to Caroline, handsome rings to his various friends, and large legacies to his three servants. Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington were kindly portioned legacies of plate and china, and five hundred pounds a-piece, to buy rings, bequeathed to them.

So far so good. But, lo and behold! there was a small codicil.

The codicil was written upon a sheet of common writing-paper, and in a hurried, uncertain hand: it was excessively brief. In few words it stated, that having just heard of the lamentable death of his uncle, Mr. Craiglethorpe, the testator wished to cancel his will; but feeling too ill to send for or see his solicitor, he left this paper, which he trusted no one would dispute. The dispositions of the codicil were very simple. The whole of the property to which he might lay claim as heir to Mr. Craiglethorpe, with half his own fortune, was left to Mr. Wilmington; the other half to Harry, Mr. Wilmington being executor and residuary legatee; all the legacies in the will being confirmed. The possibility that Mr. Craiglethorpe should have survived the catastrophe had evidently never entered his thoughts. Harry could not help regretting that some provision, should this event, however improbable, occur, had not been made; but was not surprised, in the evident hurry in which the paper had been drawn up, that it had not been done.

The signature to this paper seemed written with more care than the other portions. It was firm and distinct; the rest had evidently been penned in haste and with difficulty. It was impossible, it was not in human nature, for Harry to feel insensible to this proof of his friend's attachment and generous love for his interests and those of his family; the bequest was indeed most well-timed, most kindly and affectionately done. His heart swelled as he looked at the paper, and

thought of the poor, trembling hand, now for ever still, which had traced these uncertain lines with so much apparent difficulty; and the tears stood in his eyes as the solicitor, folding up the codicil, turned round to shake hands and congratulate him.

You will not be much interested to hear how Mr. Wilmington received the news of this signal piece of good fortune, or the unbounded exultation of Lizzy. Her raptures she did not attempt to conceal; nor could Caroline or Henry endeavour to disguise their feelings of disgust. Restored to affluence, no longer an object of consideration and pity, she was become almost insupportable to them. They agreed that the first benefit to be derived from their share of the inheritance should be, to release themselves from this disagreeable companionship and take a house for themselves.

Henry's scruples were now of course at an end, and he made preparations for his marriage taking place during the course of the summer; and he and Flavia decided to go down into Wales and live upon one of her estates, and to ask Caroline to come and live with them.

It may be as well to mention, as a proof of the affection with which poor Selwyn was regarded by his servants, that old Charles, whose health had suffered a good deal by his attendance, took his master's death so earnestly to heart, that it was thought advisable to remove him from the house before the funeral should take place: he went to visit a brother of his, who lived at some distance from London, having first exacted a promise that he should be allowed to follow his master to the grave; but by some accident or other, he never received the letter naming the day, which Henry had written to him, and he did not arrive in town till two days after it was over. His signature and that of the housekeeper were appended as witnesses to the codicil.

Mr. Wilmington showed much good nature in exerting himself to get good places for the two female servants. For the housekeeper he provided an excellent one in Northumberland; for the cook, in Devonshire. Caroline and Henry were pleased with this proof of kind anxiety for their welfare. It seemed as if his unparalleled good fortune had softened his heart. Had the golden cup of the pilgrim, thrust in at the window, produced the right effect?

Time will show. For the present, at least, Mr. Wilmington is certainly a more thoughtful and apparently a better man.

He returned to his beautiful house at Roehampton, but could not be persuaded, as yet, by Lizzy, to re-inhabit his

splendid mansion in Belgrave Square. He seemed to have lost, in some degree, his taste for show and expense. He had indeed shot his last bolt. This fortune exhausted, there was no second Craiglethorpe, no second inheritance to replenish his purse. Perhaps it was this consideration, perhaps all he had suffered—and he had suffered more than they were any of them aware of—which had sobered him. Lizzy, however, remained just the same: shallow, vain, heartless, and selfish as ever.

The marriage of Henry and Flavia took place during the ensuing summer; after which they settled in Wales, Caroline living with them.

They all loved a country life, and they were all alike indifferent to general society. They left Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington to enjoy their taste for great dinners and great parties, and they very seldom came to London. There I will leave them for about three years, each member of the family circle happy in his or her own way, and all as happy as people can possibly expect to be in this life. And this ends Part the Second of my story.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as carded wool;
But the cruel rocks they gored her side,
Like the horns of an angry bull.—LONGFELLOW.

THE captain paced the deck, looking up from time to time anxiously at the threatening sky.

All the canvass was spread; the very sky-sails expanded their white wings against the azure vault; but the speaking-trumpet was heard, its loud voice calling all hands to the shrouds, and all sails to be furled with the utmost expedition. Now the good seaman looked at the heavens, now anxiously at the masts, where his orders were being obeyed with the utmost possible speed; but it was too late.

It was not the usual time of year for the tornadoes. The officers had been dining below; the watch had been remiss in observing the slight signs which had indicated the coming tempest. It was too late for the preparations to be completed, and for the good ship to be made ready to meet the desperate struggle.

Half the sails were yet unfurled, when the tempest burst upon her in all its fury, shivering to rags every sail that remained displayed.

The wind roared like some fierce demon, hungry to devour his prey; the sea, lately so calm, rose mountains high; the blue lightning flashed and flared round the horizon like some curtain of flame; and the electric fire ran along the chains and iron-work of the devoted vessel. Down poured the rain in torrents, in a deluge. The sky was darkened above, the waters yawned beneath; the lurid flashes alone gave light from moment to moment, and pointed to the inevitable destruction.

All was hurry and dismay: the rush and trampling of the sailors, the shrill loud calling of the speaking trumpet, the wail of women, the cries of frightened little children, the agonised looks of fathers and husbands. The countenance

of the captain, collected and stern, yet pale as death, added to the dire effect of the tremendous scene. A small, lean, wrinkled, yellow, bent old man stood by himself upon the deck, and looked around him.

He had no wife, no child, no friend on board, for whom to care or feel; but he had some sympathy with the captain, for whom he had a great esteem; and, therefore, knowing he could not assist, his only anxiety was not to trouble him. He therefore stood somewhat apart from the general turmoil, his sharp brown eye intent upon what was going on, watching the progress of the storm. Suddenly a voice was heard louder than the voice of the tempest; the main-mast had fallen, men were killed and maimed, and groans of agony were added to the scenes of terror. "The leak! the leak! All hands to the pumps!"

In spite of her high reputation, the vessel had left Calcutta in some respects not such as ought to have been permitted. Why this had been, it is useless to relate, but so it was.

The old man began to anticipate the worst. I call him the old man; but he was not quite so old as his lean, weazened figure and face might have led you to believe. He stood still at that place near the bulwarks which he had at first taken, steadied himself by a rope, gazed into the dark gulf of whelming waters, and thus he meditated:—

"And this, then, is the end of it all! You and your hard-earned riches; your ingots, your diamonds, your bills of exchange; down, down to the fathomless depths of the ocean; food for fishes—food for fishes!"

Then he cast a hurried retrospect over that life of more than sixty years, which had been so earnest, so busy, so indefatigable; and he asked himself what he had done. It was a dry and dreary picture. He had laboured for himself; that was what he had done; laboured hard and most successfully, to ensure to himself the means of enjoyment; and now he was coming home to enjoy.

And must he go down into the deep before the enjoyment for which he thirsted had been even tasted? Into that land of darkness, which to him was a grave indeed; where there was "neither work, nor desire, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" to which he thought himself going?

He cast his eyes upon those living, anxious beings with whom the deck was crowded; upon husbands clasping their wives to their hearts, and begging them to take courage; upon tender mothers whispering the consolations of faith to their terrified little ones telling them of One whose path is

on the mighty waters, and who will not forsake us even amidst the shadows of death. And he felt how entirely he was alone.

Was there any one on earth for whom he cared, or who cared for him?

Yes; there were two. But they were far away; safe in that England, that cynosure of all his aspirations, which now he must never see.

There was that old schoolboy pet, some fifteen years or more younger than himself; that gay, handsome lad whom he had loved as a child, delighted in as a youth, and taken pride in as a man; to whom he had intended to return, no longer a poor friend, treated with affection, though in far less brilliant circumstances than the young Wilmington he was so proud of; but with a splendid fortune, able to cope with, nay, outshine his friend, and to dazzle him in his turn with a splendour which even he would find it hard to equal. And there was Selwyn, the child of his sister, whom he had left a little fellow about ten years old.

He thought of these, and of a few other old cronies, with whom he had exchanged sarcastic wit, and brief, petty converse; and of all his castles in the air, more splendid, and, as he thought, far more substantial, than the far-famed palace of Aladdin: of the splendid mansion, the noble park, the troops of deer, that were to have been his, and of the eastern gems and treasures that were to have adorned his halls: of the feasts he was to give; the choice companionship he was to enjoy; of Wilmington adorning his circle, not as a matter almost of condescension for past kindness, but as an equal, though a favourite guest.

And he sighed. It was only one sigh that firm, determined heart cast over the blighted prospect; and then the shock came. She had been driven on a hidden rock; she struck, and the dreadful cry, "She has parted!" was followed by the rushing of the overwhelming waves.

The weaker were swept at once from the deck; some of the stronger and more dexterous contrived to lower the boats—to spring in. And now the ship heaved like a living creature; she seemed to make one desperate struggle for existence, and then went down head-foremost.

The eddy spread wide its circling waves, threatening to suck every boat into the fatal whirlpool. It was the danger but of a moment: the storm began to subside; the lightning gave forth faint streams of fire; the thunder rolled fainter and fainter; the wind lulled; the waves heaved with a lulling motion.

The waters had passed over her, and she was gone, with all her treasures, to the land of forgetfulness; if not with five hundred men, yet with a number never known, never even counted. There lie their bones to whiten in the caves of the sea-monsters; their wealth to be gathered to the buried riches which the ocean has swallowed in his ravenous maw. There suddenly the tale of their lives is stopped short: their hopes, their schemes, their plans, and their wishes, their affections and their hatreds, their grand intentions and their selfish regards—there they are all gone down into the green, unfathomable deeps together.

A few that escaped in one of the boats were cast upon a howling desert shore. There was no trace of even the most savage man to be discerned. Nature appeared as she must have done before she was surrendered into the hands of that being, formed, though imperfectly, in the image of his Maker, to whom it was given to possess it, and to subdue it.

Wide plains were there, where the zebra and the buffalo, and the antelope in myriads, were feeding. Tangled bush, formed of all the wondrous vegetation of the tropics, where the palm and the cotton-tree were matted together by the festoons of the creepers, and the curious orchidaceæ that fed upon their branches.

The wild Guinea-grass grew above their heads. The very herbage was impenetrable to poor, shrinking, helpless man, despoiled of all his means of struggling with nature: empty-handed, barely-clothed, and hungering for food and for water; while the dreadful roar of the lions and leopards, and other beasts of prey, was heard as the evening approached, and the carnivori sallied forth upon their appointed task, to keep down the swarming and helpless myriads which fed upon the vegetable nature.

Did they any of them survive? Was it worth their while even to survive? Society had closed over them. Before they could return, they would have long been counted among the dead, and their places would have been swept away.

The waves of the constantly-flowing social life would have passed over them, and they be as effectually submerged as those who slept in the deep sea.

Nothing is so piteous, nothing so affecting to me, as the tales of those long-lost mariners who have been long counted

among the dead, and who, after years of heroic struggle and incredible hardship, at last attain the haven of civilized life, and find there no harbour for them.

Nobody wants them; their places are filled. If they had money, it has been taken by their heirs; and who wishes to be called upon to restore it? If they had none, they are beggars, without a home or a prospect. Their means of life, their plans, their connections with the world, have all disappeared from the scene. The weather-beaten sailor has to begin the world again.

What became of that dry, weazen-faced, wrinkled man, with his sharp intelligent eyes, like those of some demon, rather than those of a human being, though not of an altogether unkindly demon? for he had something that was not alone quickness of intellect: he had a good deal of real genuine feeling under his dry caustic ways. This greediness of gain had never led him to practise any of that barbarous injustice, too common, I fear in those days, upon that Eastern stage where the poor, gentle Hindoos figured like the vegetable-eaters of desert Africa, and the Europeans too well represented the beasts of prey sent there to keep them down.

It was a pity he was lost; for, had he returned to England, it is possible that, with his dispositions, he might have taken it into his head to devote part of his immense wealth to some noble work of charity. Besides, how might not he have encouraged Art!

Ay, but remember he might have become a proud, heartless, greedy sensualist. He had so bad an opinion of mankind that all his better aspirations might have been blighted by that baneful tendency. He might, as some very rich men do, have grown harder and harder, colder and colder, and his heart have shrivelled up till it became dry and withered as a perished root, from which nothing vernal again could spring: only fitted to be cast into the fire.

Think of that, and you will agree with me that it would have been far, far better to sink like lead in the mighty waters, with his head full of as yet innocent schemes of enjoyment, and his heart yearning towards his country and his friends.

It was a small, ill-built, inconvenient timber-ship, sailing from the western coast of Africa (from Sierra Leone, I believe) that was labouring up the river, the wind being in her favour, but the tide against her. The motley crew of ill-looking white men, swarthy and pirate-like-looking Maroons, and negroes, scarcely redeemed from the savage life of the bush, were in consonance with the black, heavy hull, the short, ill-formed masts, the dingy canvass and tackle, and the dirty deck of the unpromising craft they had guided, through storm and calm, to the teeming river Thames.

A man sat upon the deck above the steerage, dressed in an old brown coat, which had once been snuff-colour, but the original colour had long been lost amid the injuries of time. It was now of a dark, dirty hue, and bore the evidence of weary days in its forlorn and tattered appearance. An old, napless hat was upon his head, a dirty checked handkerchief round his neck; his waistcoat and nether garments were of a piece with the rest; and his travel-worn shoes would hardly hold together. He leaned upon a staff formed of the wild wood of Africa, and mused and gazed, as the vessel slowly and heavily made way.

He was thinner, more wrinkled, more time and weather-worn, than when we took leave of him, as the noble East Indiaman parted upon the rock; and the handsome though somewhat careless dress which he then wore had gradually been defaced, if I may use the term, till it had assumed the beggarly aspect which it had now. But in spite of the shrivelled limbs, meagre features, and miserable attire, there was that in the man which you could not look upon without a certain interest and curiosity. There was something in his face that poverty could not depress nor hardships degrade: the eye, that window of the soul, was still clear, bright, sharp, and intelligent; and still a something that one could not help liking was to be detected in his grim smile.

He had endured a terrible voyage home. The man who started from India surrounded with every luxury and appliance which it was possible to accumulate upon ship-board, and carrying with him the means of commanding every comfort and enjoyment that gold could procure upon land, had lain with this motley crew of wretches, rather than seamen, in the steerage, for sixteen weeks; the heavy timber with which the ship was laden impeding her progress on the one hand; the miserable crew with which he was surrounded, by their mismanagement, exposing her to all sorts of danger on the other. The vessel reeked with the villanous stench of rancid palm-oil, which formed part of her cargo; smelling of the

bilge-water which was daily raised by pumps kept constantly at work, to keep down the leak; his food had been mouldy biscuit, junk hard as iron, filthy water, without coffee, tea, milk, or fresh provisions of any kind. Yet he had preserved his imperturbable serenity of aspect; had been just the same dry, composed, caustic character as upon the deck of the East Indiaman; had never seemed to be the least affected by the intense heat, when the tropical sun beat upon the deck, or by the biting cold of the "chops of the Channel," when in raw, ungenial weather they arrived there. He seemed impenetrable to outward evils, and went on just in his usual way: walking about, watching everything, and saying little or nothing.

He seemed to have quite matter enough for rumination to employ him; and there he sat upon the deck in his tattered garments; and with just ten shillings and a few coppers left in his pocket, he gazed about him, smiling all the time with a sort of quiet, inward smile which he had; and thought of his own prudence and precaution in having transmitted a large sum to England, far more than sufficient for any purpose that he could possibly want; and he revelled in the idea of the contrast between his future wealth, ease, and consequence, and his present poverty and degradation.

It was a dull, hazy evening; no bright lights shone upon the Culvers or illuminated the low Essex or the wooded Kentish shores. The wind whistled among the shrouds; the red-sailed fishing-boats, the grim colliers, the large and lofty Indiamen, floated idly along. At last they reached the Pool, crowded with a forest of masts; made their way amid the confusion, moored, and were close to land.

The other and more important passengers (for there were one or two cabin passengers even in this horrid craft) leapt ashore; the old man appeared on deck, carrying a blue pocket-handkerchief in his hand, which contained the whole of his worldly goods.

CHAPTER II.

Waning, waning, ever waning,
Life's full glory pales away;
Fast the youth there's no regaining
Darkens down in swift decay.
Hopes despairing, smiles and sorrows,
Blossoms flush them but to fall:
All life's judging death still borrows,
Shrouds and graves are waiting all.

Slowly—the last of all the impatient voyagers, his old hat drawn over his brows, his blue bundle in his hand—the weather-beaten and time-worn wayfarer crossed the little wooden bridge which led to the pier; but when arrived there he did not hurry forward like the rest through the foul and dirty streets, amid staggering wains, heavy laden carts, grim custom-house porters, weather-worn seamen, disorderly boys, and all the dirty rabble that salute one upon reaching the quays of the richest, the grandest, the most luxurious, and, I should suppose, take it all in all, the cleanest metropolis in the world. No yearning hearts of loving relations were beating to welcome his return; no cheerful fire was blazing up; no comfortable meal ready prepared by loving hands for him. The dark, dirty, miry city before him; the dull, colourless sky overhead, whence already the rain began slowly to drizzle, were but types of that dreary feeling with which the stranger stepped upon his native shore. He paused, turned round, and stood still upon the wooden pier, thinking of what he should do.

Fifteen years since he had quitted his native land; four since he had received the slightest intelligence from it. What changes would have and had taken place since he quitted England, of which he was aware, which he could anticipate! What changes might have taken place of which he knew nothing! Of the few left that he in the least degree cared for, who might be among the living, who among the dead? Who in this fluctuating world occupying the same position as when he had last heard of them? The only two among the few whom he cared for at all—whom he might be said to care much for—were, as I have said, his nephew, Albert Selwyn,

and his old pet and favourite, Mr. Wilmington. For Albert he could not feel any personal affection: he had left home when he was a boy of about ten years old, but he had loved the boy in his way; and if he might rely upon the intercourse of letters, that boy had loved and still loved him.

He had, during the leisure for meditation afforded by the voyage, often thought upon the expressions of his gratitude and affection with much pleasure; a pleasure only damped by his fear for Selwyn's health, which was of acknowledged delicacy, and a sort of dread that he should find him worse, and in a declining state, if still alive. He had looked, therefore, with more despondency than hope to this side of his prospects; but not so as regarded Wilmington.

Wilmington he had left a fine handsome man of about thirty, to whom he was fondly, nay foolishly, attached. He knew, he felt, that Wilmington did not altogether perhaps merit his partiality; but that was no matter to him. He liked the man; he was proud of him; he was fond of him: the perfect contrast between himself and this handsome, showy, dashing fellow, was delightful to him. Nothing used to please him better than to go into the Park on a Sunday, and walk side by side with this fine young man, and observe the admiration he inspired, or that he fancied he inspired; he loved to listen to his flashy but lively talk, and drop every now and then one of his own cynical, pithy sentences into the sparkling torrent of mere words. I have seen that small, thin, yellow, and, even then, withered man, walking up and down, his eye fixed with the greatest satisfaction upon Wilmington, as, mounted upon a showy steed, he figured rather indifferently as a horseman among the throng. But Craiglethorpe was no judge of horsemanship, and thought his appearance prodigiously fine.

He loved to lounge into the counting-house of Wilmington, Jones, Estcourt, and Co. merchants in the City, and chat with his friend, who was rarely to be seen at his desk, but would be sauntering up and down in a somewhat pompous and stately manner, receiving intelligence and giving orders.

It was strange how completely such a sharp observer as Craiglethorpe was taken in with all this fuss and show. I believe he thought Wilmington the finest gentleman in the world; but he had not been much accustomed to gentlemen: he came up from Scotland to sweep the floor of the counting-house in which he rose to be a partner; that house was now smashed; but he had redeemed his own losses, and managed to realise a splendid fortune in India.

Well, he stood there, gazing and meditating where he

should first go; and the result of his ruminations was, that he would go to the house of business in Mincing Lane, the street where the firm of Wilmington, Jones, and Estcourt had their location.

It was now only four o'clock, and the hours of business would not be over, or the house closed: if he made the best of his way, he might possibly catch Wilmington there. He resisted the application for a hackney-coach, and chose to walk the well-known alleys and streets that led to Mincing Lane by a short-cut from the river. The narrow street looked as dismal as ever; but the same names of firms were, with few exceptions, over the doors as when he had visited it last. He glanced his eye from one to the other; soon descried the house of business once his friend's; and, without looking at the plate upon the door, entered the counting-house.

But Wilmington, of course, was not to be seen.

The clerks were at their desks plying their goose-quills, but none of the partners were present.

"I want to see Mr. Wilmington: is he within?" asked the poverty-stricken stranger of one of the porters.

"Mr. Wilmington, sir? I beg your pardon; some mistake. Mr. Wilmington is not a partner in the house now. Mr. Jones, or Mr. Estcourt, probably?"

"Heigh! humph! not in the house? What is that you say? Ay; yes; well: if Jones and Estcourt are at home, I'll speak to them."

The old porter stared at this way of naming gentlemen to his imagination of more consequence than the Great Mogul himself, and by a wretched, beggarly-looking old fellow, too; and he answered somewhat haughtily, that Mr. Jones and Mr. Estcourt were probably not at present in the house, and if they were, most likely too busy to be seen.

"Go and inquire, will you, please?" said Craiglethorpe; not, however, offering the half-crown, the customary attendant upon such applications; not even the shilling. Mr. Craiglethorpe was one who never paid other people's servants for doing their own duty.

The old porter hesitated, hummed and hawed.

"Go and tell them, you old harpy!" said Craiglethorpe testily, and perfectly comprehending the cause of the man's hesitation, "that an old gentleman of their acquaintance, lately returned from abroad, wishes to speak with one of them. Do what I ask you," he added, seeing the old man still hesitated; "or when I *do* see them, I'll tell them their porter cannot be got to do a poor man's errand—however important it may be to themselves—of which he knows no-

thing; that is, unless he can extort a shilling, which I, for one, won't pay."

The porter upon this sulkily advanced to an inner door, and opening it, said there was a man wanted to speak either to Mr. Estcourt or to Mr. Jones.

"What sort of a man?" was heard in the hoarse croaking voice of Mr. Jones. "I'm busy now; tell him to call again to-morrow."

"Say to-morrow won't do."

"Sir, he says to-morrow won't do."

"What sort of a man is he?"

The porter entered the room before he answered, "Some poor, ragged, shipwrecked fellow, I fancy, by his look, come to beg a little trifle or so at your hands."

"Is that all? Here, give him five shillings, and tell him to go about his business."

The man returned, and offered the money, with the assurance that the gentlemen were both too busy to be spoken with.

"You scoundrel!" cried Craiglethorpe, indignantly refusing the money, "who told you to ask for money for *me?* Was that what I wanted to see the partners for? But why should I see them, after all? I dare say, you can any of you tell me what I want to know," said he, turning to the row of scribbling clerks, who now sat, most of them, pen arrested on its way to inkstand, observing him; "you can any of you tell me why Mr. Wilmington withdrew from the firm, and where he is to be found now?"

"Withdrew!" repeated one of the young gentleman, in a somewhat sarcastic tone.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Craiglethorpe, going up to him.

"*Drew*—not *with*," said the young gentleman, who felt himself inclined to set up for something in the line of Mr. Estcourt; "*drew*, and somewhat too largely, till the other partners found it incumbent upon them, I believe, to hint at the *with* you have been pleased to make use of, as a proper addition to the *draw*. And so Mr. Wilmington became no longer a partner in the house."

The expression of Craiglethorpe's face, though his was a countenance used rather to hide than reveal what passed within, betrayed how much he was shocked at this unexpected intelligence.

He did not speak for a few minutes; not until, with some effort, he had recovered his usual coolness and composure. He stood there while the clerks stared at him.

There was a something of authority in his tone and manner which contrasted so strangely with his mean and miserable appearance. At last he said—

"Well, and what has become of him?"

"Oh, become of him, sir? Mr. Wilmington is one always sure to fall upon his feet. Never was there a man with so much resource. Money seems literally to flow in upon him. He's living in the old place, just in the old style, or rather more magnificently. His son has married a great heiress, and he himself has come into a large fortune, I've heard. Mr. Estcourt and Mr. Jones were rather in too great a hurry to get rid of him, maybe."

"Very likely," responded the strange visitor, visibly brightening at this account. "Then Mr. Wilmington is still to be found either at Wimbledon or in Belgrave Square?"

"Unless he is gone down to his son's seat in Wales," with something rather like a sneer.

Craiglethorpe left the apartment without a word more.

"Queer old fellow, that," said one youngster to a senior.

The senior replied—

"I wish I were his heir."

"Now you'll see," put in another, "if Wilmington, after all his luck in money matters, will not find something turning up in that quarter."

And so they chatted away, whilst the subject of their speculations, having by this time hired a hackney-coach at the first stand he came to, was in that jumbling vehicle jolting along to Belgrave Square.

He stopped before one of the large houses in the centre, and the coachman descended slowly to knock, and when that was unavailing, to ring; upon which a small footboy appeared at the area gate, which was locked, and inquired what he wanted, as the family were out of town, and the servants left in charge of the house too busy, he might have added, entertaining a festive party below, to attend to the door, or any other of their master's concerns or interests.

"Ask where Mr. Wilmington now is," said a voice from within the coach.

"Don't know, sir."

"Ask whether there is any one within that I can speak to."

The boy descended, and, after some delay, a fat, rosy-looking footman, his mouth yet filled with the good things he was devouring, came hastily up the steps, and in an insolent sort of manner told him to let him know his business, and be quiet.

Mr. Craiglethorpe now put his head to the window and bade the fellow, in an authoritative tone, open the area door and come and speak to him. "They showed the whip and the slaves fled." The tone of authority which was assumed, even though it proceeded from one riding in a jarvey, startled the man. He opened the area door, and came out; but when he saw the poor, beggarly creature who had addressed him in this high tone, he became angry and insolent.

"Where's your master?"

"Mr. Wilmington? Not here."

"Out of town?"

"I suppose so, if he ain't in town."

"At Wimbledon?"

"Where else should he be?"

Such was the style of the servant's answers.

Now Mr. Craiglethorpe was just that sort of man to take very unjust offence. His feelings were very much more susceptible than any one gave him credit for, or than he was himself aware of. He felt things keenly. He loved so few, and cared for the love of so few, that it was seldom his affections were called into play, and when they were not, he minded little; but when his affections *were* concerned, he felt things excessively. Little things that others might have overlooked wounded him sorely. But he kept his feelings so to himself that no one was aware of their existence. No one could, therefore, in his boyhood have been aware of the necessity of controlling them, and he was not in the least aware of this necessity himself. He passed for one that had better feel a great deal more than he did, rather than for one who ought to restrain his sensibilities. The consequence was, that when such were excited, they were as confused and tumultuous, and as little reasonable, as those of a mere child.

It would seem almost incredible, that the insolence with which he found himself treated at the door of his dearest friend, by this menial, wounded and offended him. The damp it threw upon his feelings, the sort of indignant sorrow which it raised in his heart, was as unreasonable as it was great. To be thus forgotten and thus treated at that man's door, where he had once been greeted so warmly, and where he never entered but to be honoured for his wealth, and loved, as he thought, for himself. He sat there, deeply hurt. He would not declare his name, which he knew would at once ensure respect, servility even from the insolent domestic; with a curious, but common inconsistency, he was angry at being treated as what he appeared, instead of as what he

knew that he was. He spent some little time endeavouring to reprove the man for his insolence, at which the fellow only laughed outright, and retreated down the area stairs, locking the gate, while the coachman snivelled as he mounted his box, and proceeded with his beggarly fare, as he esteemed him, to Wimbledon. It was a melancholy, painful journey.

Was it one of those presentiments which such characters as Mr. Craiglethorpe were perhaps more than commonly prone to? Was it the result of the feelings excited by the manner of the man-servant? Was it that the body was beginning to be very weary, and that invincible spirit to give way a little? Certain it is, this strange, inconsistent man, who had borne with unconquerable courage and fortitude the perils and sufferings of so many years, felt his heart fail him for the first time, as he jumbled uncomfortably along.

The carriage mounted Putney Hill, and now the sweet breezes of Wimbledon Common, blowing over the gorse and heath, salute him. The rain has cleared away; the sun, in a yellow, misty, gleaming glory, is sinking, and his last rays tint the green and beautiful plantations that surround him. Gay equipages from time to time glance by; children are sailing boats upon some of the little ponds; cattle and sheep are grazing; geese wandering over the short herbage: a sweet suburban scene it is; as beautiful a scene in its way as many a more rural one.

And its influences are felt: old memories of how he has crossed this common, a younger and a gayer man, to share in the Sunday parties at his friend's; of the jovial dinners, when the wine circulated so freely, and the joke and laugh were exchanged; those pleasant feasts, the hospitable table, the cordial meetings; of walks upon the common after church; of all the pleasures which villa life affords to the tired worshipper and hunter after mammon, rise to his recollection, and his gloomy imaginations vanish.

He fancies himself clasped to the heart of his friend. Strange and unnatural you may perhaps imagine such tender thoughts to be on the part of this world-hardened and apparently most dry and prosaic man; but in every heart of any value there is a sacred corner kept in reserve for thoughts and for feelings of this description; and it is to me most pleasing when I discern these little gleams of tenderness and romance bursting forth from behind the case-hardened outside of one apparently only made for business, to slave and to gain.

CHAPTER III.

The paradise I dreamed I have not found.
T. E. Reade.

The coach stops at the gates, and the old woman totters out, key in hand, to fling the splendid iron gates open; and open they flew, with hideous rebound and jarring sound.

And now Mr. Craiglethorpe's face is at the window: he can resist the influence of curiosity no longer; he is intently watching all the changes that the place, during his long absence, has undergone.

A great many alterations there had been; but every alteration has been an advance in splendour and luxury.

Evidently the world had prospered with Wilmington, and so far he is very cordially glad. He was not of a nature given to envy, that poisonous venom which had made a portion of the unhealthy influences to which his heart was but too subject. He loved to see his friend flourish. All are not capable of even this poor virtue. He loved to see it, for he had generally been flourishing himself; and, to his praise be it said, he could rejoice in it now, though his own latter years had been so unfortunate. He rejoiced in it, without reference to himself, even as regarded the safety of his hundred thousand pounds. He never had questioned the security of that, and did not at that moment, indeed, think of it at all.

Passing through the splendid gates, which were new, the coach trundled along the gravel road, which, winding round a lawn, kept with the most minute attention to neatness, bordered by plantations of most rare and beautiful shrubs, and adorned with a few magnificent trees, sloped from the house upon every side but one, that upon which the offices and stables stood; and they were so well planted out that they appeared only as a grove, above which the vane of the weather-cock sparkling in the sun might be seen.

This lawn, too, was new. There had not been the same

extent of dressed grounds before; there had been a few fields and a smaller pleasure-ground. The house, too, seemed magnified, and so it certainly was; and the Grecian portico supported upon giant Ionic pillars, which looked so classical and imposing, was certainly an addition.

Altogether things looked so very grand, that even Craiglethorpe, little as he heeded such matters—little as he had been accustomed to meet with any man wealthier or more important than himself—began to feel the influence of this splendour in some slight degree, and to wonder whether he should find his friend unchanged, amid all these changes.

And now the jarvey arrives at the portico, rattles behind the magnificent columns, and stops at the gilt and mahogany door; a world too fine for an outer door, in every eye but that of Mr. Wilmington and his Lizzy.

The coachman again, in his heavy, dirty coat, and battered hat, tumbles rather than descends from his box, and rings.

The loud ring of the bell may be heard echoing through the lofty apartments of the spacious mansion; and two footmen in liveries of pink, white, and silver, present themselves at the door.

"Is Mr. Wilmington at home? Let me out, can't you?" cries Craiglethorpe to the hackney-coachman, who is waiting for an answer to the first question before he proceeds to liberate his fare.

"Let me out, can't you? What are you waiting for?"

And the man with some difficulty turns the broken hasp. The steps rattle down, and Mr. Craiglethorpe, descending hastily, without further ceremony prepares to enter the house.

But he is interrupted by the fine gentlemen within.

"Your card, sir, if you please. I will inquire whether Mr. Wilmington *is* at home."

"Suppose I have no card?" answered Mr. Craiglethorpe, endeavouring impatiently to force an entrance. "Where is your master, Mr. Wilmington? where? where, young man?" for now his heart began to beat, and his breath to fail him, in strange, unwonted emotion.

"I will go and inquire. Your name, sir, if you please."

"No matter for my name; no matter for my name: I shall be welcome, never fear, young man."

"But, sir —— Mr. Wilmington ——"

But opposition polite, such as those well-bred servants might offer, was in vain.

He has already passed the threshold; he stands in the

lofty hall, painted in the most elaborate style, to imitate the rarest marbles, glittering with gilding, and adorned with suits of armour, trophies of arms, and rarities from every quarter of the globe; amid which the traveller, with a secret pleasure, remarks some magnificent shells and gorgeous specimens of eastern splendour presented by himself.

A moment he paused and gazed around; then saying, "Which door?" laid his hand upon the lock of the nearest, and before the astonished footman could interfere, had opened it and entered.

The windows were opened to the flower-garden and lawn; the white curtains rose and fell as the wind, rather fresher this evening than usual, came floating into the room, laden with the delicious perfume from the large beds of mignonette; everything, even to the beds of mignonette, being upon the largest and most profuse scale, in and about this mansion.

You recollect the room, perhaps; I favoured you with a somewhat tedious description of it before; but you will please to fancy it now very much more gaudy and showy, inasmuch as Mrs. Wilmington's taste has now been exercised upon it for three or four years, so that it is absolutely crowded with all sorts of useless, expensive, and, as some think, beautiful toys, and bits of choice furniture.

There was no one in it but a lady, tall and slender, with a fine face and complexion, abundance of ringlets of soft brown hair, and dressed in an elegant and extremely fashionable sort of *négligé*, who lay extended upon a sofa, amid cushions of embroidered satin, reading the last new novel. Perhaps you know her, too, again. She was so deeply engaged in her studies that she did not hear the door open; but the bustle of the footman, who now hurried up, interfering with —"Really, sir; you must not, sir ——! Mrs. Wilmington, sir ——!" aroused her; and starting up, this tall, fair creature, all pink ribbons and white muslin, confronted the astonished stranger.

Her astonishment was at least equal to his.

He had only expected to meet Mr. Wilmington, and was astounded for the moment when he stumbled upon this beautiful young lady. She stood as if struck dumb with amazement, to see this little, ill-looking, yellow, ugly, and, so please you, somewhat dirty-looking old man, dressed in his tattered suit of rusty-brown, thus unceremoniously intruding himself into her dining-room.

"Madam!" he said.

"Sir!" she replied, measuring him haughtily from head to foot; and then turning to her servants, she said, with considerable displeasure in her tone—

"Show this man into some other room, if you please. Why do you disturb me here?"

"He would come in; we couldn't prevent him. Sir," began both footmen at once, "be pleased to walk out."

Whilst the lady turned scornfully away, and approached the window.

But Mr. Craiglethorpe shook off the servants. Not ill-humouredly, though. He was inclined to smile at the odd mistake they were all making; he was too happy, too bewildered, to think of being offended.

"Let me alone, my good fellows, will you?" said he, good-humouredly; "I know very well what I'm about. Is that then Mrs. Wilmington? the new one; your master's young wife?"

"That's Mrs. Wilmington, sir."

"And your master?"

"Master is not at home. If you'd have listened to us, you might have spared yourself this trouble, and us a good —— But come away, sir; come away, won't you?" They went on in a coaxing sort of way; for they both began to think the intruder must be some unfortunate madman.

He listened not, but approached Mrs. Wilmington. And now his eye twinkled, and he breathed hard, and a faint flush just tinted his sallow and weather-beaten cheek; and he said, endeavouring to take her hand, and with a merry smile—

"Are *you* my friend's wife? Tell me where he is to be found now?"

"Sir!" she exclaimed, again drawing herself up, "who may you be?"

"One too much changed by toil and hardship for the beautiful Eliza Emerson to remember," was his reply.

"Remember!" retreating farther towards the window, as he held out his hand, and drawing her dress together, as if she feared infection even from the touch of one of such ignoble appearance. "Remember! Eliza Emerson! I protest, sir, I have not the most distant recollection of ever having had the honour of seeing you before."

"No, possibly not; and yet I think I was much the same sort of looking fellow then that I am now; but Wilmington will perhaps have a better memory. Tell me, madam, is he at home; and where shall I find him?"

The young lady had, by this time, changed colour once or twice, and kept eyeing the figure before her with a strange searching look. It seemed as if, in spite of what she had just said, he was not so totally unknown to her as her words implied. She looked at him, turned away, and was silent for a few seconds.

But Lizzy was not one who lost her presence of mind upon any occasion where her interests were concerned.

When, therefore, the stranger advanced, as she retreated, repeating his request more urgently, that she would tell him where Mr. Wilmington was to be found, the young lady answered somewhat pettishly, that she was sure she didn't exactly know; all she could tell was, that he had left home for a few days, and wouldn't be back—she couldn't tell when.

"Left home!" and his countenance fell. He looked once more round the room, sighed, and sank down into a chair that stood near him.

It was merely the disappointment that overpowered him at this moment. He had wound his expectation to the certainty, that a few seconds more and he should be with his friend; and now the meeting, upon which he might have been said to have *lived* for so many months, was indefinitely postponed, he knew not till when.

"Really, sir," began the lady again, "I must say, this is a very strange liberty you are taking. William—Thomas—beg this gentleman to take himself away."

It was plain she did not think him mad, as did her servants; they were perplexed beyond measure at this strange behaviour. It was evident the enigma was not quite so inexplicable to her.

She was very much agitated, however: her cheeks, even her lips, were pale; but she struggled hard to preserve an exterior of composure.

"If you do not know what day he will return, you can at least tell me where he is gone. I can follow him," said Mr. Craiglethorpe, after a moment's thought.

"No, I can't; I really don't know; and if I did, Mr. Wilmington is away upon important business, and can't be troubled just now with strangers, and can't attend to other people's concerns; and, indeed, I can't tell anything about where he is ——"

So she kept repeating in a hurried, uncomfortable manner; a manner every moment becoming more and more nervous and agitated, as she kept glancing furtively from time to time at the stranger.

"Strangers!—troubled! No, madam. I flatter myself though *you* may have forgotten me, he will not. Did he never talk to you of his friend?"

"Leave the room!" cried she, authoritatively, turning to the servants.

They marvelled, but obeyed, and retired to the servants' hall to discuss their wonderment as to who the beggar could possibly be.

"His friend," rising, now the servants had left the room, and giving way to feelings he could no longer control; "did he never talk to you of his friend Craiglethorpe?"

"Certainly, sir, very often," answered she, with astonishing coolness; "but that gentlemen has been for years dead."

"You are mistaken, Lizzy Emerson," rising, and with a face working with much emotion: "you are mistaken; he is alive, and the man before you is he."

He would have caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"I must beg —— Good gracious! I shall call the servants —— Excuse me, sir; I really cannot comprehend. Mr. Craiglethorpe, I beg to inform you, has been dead some years. We *know* it," with emphasis. "This is a most extraordinary attempt at imposition." But as she said these words, she grew paler and paler. She, however, walked past him across the room to her work-table, took out a bottle of lavender-water and applied it to her lips.

The stimulant restored the colour in some degree to her face; but if you could have felt her hands, they were deadly cold.

Mr. Craiglethorpe followed her. He was entirely deceived by her manner.

"Years and sufferings have then changed me more than I had imagined, Lizzy Emerson. Do you not know me, indeed?" said he again.

"I have looked again and again," said she, "and there is not the least likeness in the world. Besides, he's been dead years and years. And so"—her courage rising with the danger she saw approaching, she really was sublime upon this occasion—"I would have you take yourself away, and not trouble Mr. Wilmington or any one else with such a barefaced attempt at imposture; for no one on earth will believe you for a moment who sees your face." And she was turning away to make her retreat by the window, whilst he stood as one petrified; but she presently turned, and said, "And I would desire you to say nothing of this pretended story to any of the servants, or, indeed, to any one else. You will

only get into a scrape if you do. I warn you; and," glancing at his tattered coat, "if this is a tale trumped up because you are in want of money, here," taking out her purse, "are five sovereigns; and if you want more," offering it to him, "come to me."

"Damn your money!" cried he, pushing her hand from him; "for you *do* know me."

The woman who could have preserved her self-possession so far was not likely to lose it, whatever might now happen. She coolly withdrew her hand, and saying, "I intended to serve you; I don't want to force my money upon any one," again turned away.

She was longing to escape into the garden; her knees were beginning to knock together. A few minutes more, and she was afraid she should fall; but her resolution in this crisis never failed her.

It is a very curious thing how people like Mrs. Wilmington, when their interests are concerned, seem capable of a resolution, an unflinching determination, and a coolness, which would be heroic in a better cause, and which their superiors in every other good quality might often be inclined to envy them.

Want of sensibility is at times a most convenient want, and compensates for many deficiencies. It stood Lizzy in good stead now; but her nerves were at last beginning to fail her, under the efforts she was making to conceal her agitation and dismay.

"Tell me where Wilmington is, this moment!" he said, seizing her by the arm; "for you *do* know me."

She released herself; but she did not scream, as she infallibly would have done, if she had believed in what she persisted in asserting; nor did she fly to the bell, and ring up the servants to turn this rude stranger out of the door.

This did not escape him. His sharp eye watched her from under its overhanging eyebrows. As he eyed her askance, he saw her colour come and go, and her hands tremble; and yet she had sent away her servants.

So, after gazing at her for a few seconds, he said—

"What all this means, Lizzy Wilmington, I cannot pretend to guess, or what reason you can have for obstinately denying that you recollect me, when I am positive that you do. Wilmington's memory will be less treacherous; or rather, I should say, its evidence will not be denied. I insist upon being told at once where he is. Zounds! madam," cried he passionately, seeing her still hesitate, "do you think to keep us asunder?"

"Far be it from me to keep him and any friend of his asunder," she replied, with affected gentleness. "And if it were possible there could be a doubt upon the subject, how gladly would he welcome his friend to his bosom! But I am not going to expose him to the pain of such a scene as this, which would annoy him still more than it does me; and therefore I must beg to be excused; whilst I desire you, sir, to leave this house, and give no more trouble upon the score of so absurd a pretension."

He looked at her again. Had his eye possessed the power, the flash from it would have blasted her.

Again he was silent for a few moments; then, gathering himself, as it were, together, he only said—

"Very well; very well!" and turned to go away.

But quick as lightning she was at the door before him.

"I will have no tampering with the servants for information, sir."

"Won't you?"

"No; and on that account I shall see you out of the house, if you please."

"Just as you like."

He laid his hand upon the lock of the door, then he turned, looked round, cast another withering glance of mingled hatred and contempt, such as it is impossible to describe, upon her, and then, she following, descended the stairs, crossed the hall, and let himself out at the front door, which she immediately locked after him. She then hurried down to the servants' hall, and forbade any of the servants to hold the slightest communication "with that man, who was a wicked impostor." Having done this, she retired to the hall, a window of which commanded a view of the approach, and placed herself there to watch what he would do.

She saw him leisurely proceed on his way out without attempting any further communication with the house; but not till the iron gate closed after him did she quit her post, and then sank down upon the sofa, perfectly sick and exhausted with the efforts she had made.

Did Lady Macbeth fall a-crying, as many would have done under such a tremendous reaction? No.

She drank a glass of water which happened to be in the room, and then sat down to consider what she should say to her husband when he returned.

Should she confess the truth to him, or should she persist in denying that the stranger was or could be Mr. Craiglethorpe?

She decided upon the latter alternative.

CHAPTER IV.

So from this dream of life his startled soul,
Nursed on the treacherous lap of youthful prime,
Awakes, and sees upon these shoals of Time
The waves of Fate in billowy surges roll.—ROSCOE.

HER husband was not to return till the following day; but fearful that any accident might throw him quite unprepared into communication with the stranger, after a little consideration the first step she decided upon was to dispatch a servant (for Mr. Wilmington was at no great distance) with a letter entreating him to return home, as something very extraordinary and disagreeable had happened, which he ought to be informed of immediately.

The letter found Mr. Wilmington sitting at table at a friend's house on the other side of London, talking and laughing, laying down the law, and playing the great man in the very highest style; that great man which his present fortune, in his own opinion, entitled him to be: he had, however, in spite of his apparent high spirits and gaiety, ever since the rapid changes which had taken place in his fortunes, become a much more nervous man than formerly. His spirits were uncertain; now higher than ever they had been known to be in his best days, at other times depressed, silent, moody: his temper, too, had suffered in a considerable degree by the various changes of his excited life; his good humour, being entirely constitutional, and sustained by no principle or real kindliness of feeling, was not proof against the disorder of his excited nerves.

Hasty he had always been; he was often now positively ill-humoured. He had never borne contradiction well; now he would endure it from no one.

These fits of ill-humour very much diminished the sort of affection which his easy temper had inspired; for few qualities are more popular among the mass of mankind than that of an easy temper; so that the people about him were beginning to get rather afraid of him, and rather to dislike him. Lizzy

however, managed this as she managed all matters where her own interest and comfort were concerned: as some might call it, very cleverly. It is wonderful how clever, under some circumstances, these characters, with little determination, truth, or feeling, seem to be. She cared little for the outbursts of his temper; she had not sufficient love for him to feel her esteem and affection wounded by his faults; she endured these weaknesses with a placid indifference, and made use of them to exercise her empire over his mind. A failing temper throws the possessor of it entirely into the power of the cool impassibility which is not to be moved by it.

"He who hath not rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down and without walls," says the wise man.

The more violent and unreasonable he knew himself at times to be, the more was Wilmington blinded to the power exercised by his wife. The man who could dare to speak to her as he sometimes did *must* be master in his own house. He fancied there could be no doubt of that.

To return, however; for there he is, sitting at table; a plate of capital venison just placed before him, and a glass of hock of the first order in his hand; and he is pledging his host, a rubicund man of millions, who sits at the bottom of the table, the very picture of high feeding and gross indulgence.

A servant puts the letter into his hand, saying that a man has just ridden express with it from Wimbledon, and had orders to beg it might be opened immediately.

At first he is inclined, seeing his wife's hand, to be angry at the interruption of his festivity, and he lays it by his plate, and attacks the venison. A knock at the door is heard; the servant, coming up to him, again bows his head, and asks whether there is any answer. His servant wants to know whether he must wait or return home.

Upon this Wilmington took up the letter, broke the seal, read it, and stuffed it into his pocket.

"Any answer?" asks the man.

"None. Nonsense! Tell him to wait a little."

He returns to his venison, but the letter in his pocket worries him. It is so very urgent. What *could* have happened?

"Excuse me for a moment," and he rises from his chair. "Tell the man to come and speak to me in the hall."

Napkin in hand, prepared to return to the feast.

"Well, John," seeing one of his own grooms appear, "what's the matter? Any bad news from home? Master

Henry—Mrs. Henry—Miss Wilmington? Nothing amiss, I hope? Your mistress ——?"

"All well, sir, as far as I know; but my mistress said as how I was to ride over as fast as I could, and see you had the letter the moment I got in; and I know she expects you'll be home to-night, sir."

"Anything happened? What can be the matter? Anybody been?"

"Nobody, as I know, sir, save and except a queer sort of an old gentleman as come in a hackney-coach, and went away again. A sort of a old lawyer, Mr. Boston says he thinks."

"A sort of an old lawyer?" taking the note out of his pocket, and going to the window to read it with more attention.

"'Something excessively extraordinary and disagreeable has happened.' I don't believe a word of it. 'But pray come home as soon as you possibly can.'"

And Mr. Wilmington, whose manner had been hurried throughout, turned pale, and his hand shook as he put the letter again into his pocket; and, turning to the groom, ordered him to ride to the next inn, and send up a pair of post-horses for his carriage immediately.

The man left the hall as directed; but Mr. Wilmington did not so immediately return to his company. He took out the letter again, and again read every syllable of it, endeavouring, in the futile way people often do, to guess the secret hidden under these general expressions.

The more he pondered it, the more uncomfortable he seemed to grow. He stood there at the window, his face turned towards it, seeming to feel extremely hot, and hurried, and uncomfortable.

Presently the dining-room door was heard to open, and a servant came out and approached him.

"Mr. Wilmington, my master bids me say that he hopes nothing's amiss, sir, and that you are coming back to table. There's some famous woodcock-pie, he bids me say, sir, as is getting quite cold."

Mr. Wilmington started, and looked suddenly round, as the man addressed him, then saying—

"I am coming, sir, immediately. Please to give orders that I shall be told as soon as the post-horses arrive."

He returned to his place. But he looked so much discomposed that his host and all the company remarked it.

"What's the matter, Wilmington? No bad news, I hope?"

"Mrs. Wilmington suddenly taken ill," said he.

"Sorry to hear that. Hope there's no danger."

"Oh, no! Liable to these attacks. Always frightened about them. Very sorry, Denham, but I believe I must leave you to-night."

"Impossible!" cried his jolly host. "Don't be such a milksop. Beg your pardon"—for Wilmington looked grave, black, very angry—"but I really can't think of sparing you. Mrs. Wilmington will be better, I don't doubt."

"I think it proper to go," said Wilmington, coldly.

"Well, I'm sorry if it must be so," said the other, good-humouredly; "but finish your dinner. That woodcock-pie I can really recommend; it is capital."

He took some upon his plate; but it was observed that his lips grew quite white when he tried to eat it.

The company looked at each other.

"I hope Mrs. Wilmington is not seriously ill?" said the lady of the house in a kind tone.

Then something struck him, and he began to assure her that she was not apparently very ill, for he recollected the assurance of the man that all was well at home, and feared that he might excite suspicion; and he stammered, and looked so very uneasy, so much more uneasy than it appeared reasonable to be, that the attention of everybody was again excited.

Had he been still in business his credit would have sunk many degrees in that half-hour; but he was a gentleman at large. Whatever his misfortunes, none of the present company were in danger of suffering by them; so, after a little confusion, all returned to the interesting occupation in which they were engaged, and the unhappy man was left to his own uneasy sensations.

In about three-quarters of an hour after this his carriage was announced; and, taking a hasty leave of his friends, he entered it and was on his way home. His drive was one miserable confusion of undefined terrors and perplexed thoughts. It was between one and two o'clock when he reached home; but he found his wife sitting up for him. She had taken off her dress and put on her dressing-gown, had dismissed her maid, made up her dressing-room fire, and sat there in an arm-chair waiting the arrival of her husband.

The more she reflected upon this most unwelcome visitor's appearance and words, the more she was convinced that he was no impostor, but the veritable Mr. Craiglethorpe himself; but the more she ran over in her mind all the consequences which must result from this re-appearance in the living world of the man so long considered dead, the more

she determined within herself never to acknowledge the identity; or rather, it would be more correct to say, the more obstinately she resolved neither to admit nor to believe in it.

You understand what I mean. This is the way men cheat themselves—old divines would say the devil cheats them—into wickedness. I don't pretend to decide the question between our own deceitful nature and the Father of Lies; but I believe this juggling with ourselves is the first step in almost every wickedness.

So she sat in her dressing-room, not far from a toilette, upon which was a glass in a delicate silver filigree frame, surrounded by small dressing-boxes of silver filigree, tortoise-shell, and ivory, with scent-bottles, green, ruby, and purple, and delicate painted china jars; all the elaborate luxury she loved so much, and to preserve which she would have been ready to pawn her soul. Pink silk and white curtains hung from the windows, hanging in beautiful festoons from cornices adorned with painted flowers and gold. The walls were hung with pictures; the room was crowded as usual with fanciful chairs and tables; the carpet was as if a ground of the softest ermine had been strewed over with bouquets of pinks and roses. So she sat leaning back in her chair, her white dressing-gown flung round her, her feet thrust into her embroidered slippers, with a strange, determined, dogged, resolute expression upon that usually vapid but very beautiful face, and a gloomy resolution in those fine blue eyes, listening to the night-wind which blew among the shrubberies, and watching for the sound of her husband's carriage. The French clock upon the chimney, supported by its golden Cupids, struck two, and a ring at the hall-door bell was heard.

She had been anxious not to excite the attention of her household, but she had desired Boston to ask Mr. Wilmington to come up to her room as soon as he arrived.

He was not less impatient for the meeting than she was. He hurried up-stairs, opened the door, and met her face to face, for she had risen as he entered.

"What is the matter, Lizzy? What can have happened?"

"Oh, such a strange thing! Such an abominable attempt at imposition! Really, what will the world come to?" she began.

"Tell me, Lizzy, what the matter is? What can you mean?" in an accent which struck her as being more hur-

ried and agitated than even this occasion, great as it was, accounted for.

"Why, bless me! don't look so dreadfully ill and frightened, for I'm positive it can't be true."

"What? How? No, of course you would never believe it. But tell me, for heaven's sake, who came, what was said, how it happened?"

"Well, sit down. It's a most odious attempt at imposition; intended to extort money, I suppose; but who'll believe it? I'm sure I was not taken in for a moment: it's impossible."

"Will you never have done tormenting me?" he cried at last, worn out with impatience. "Tell me the worst at once."

"Why, then, if you will have it, there has been a man here who pretends Mr. Craiglethorpe's alive, and that he himself is the man."

His jaw fell: he sat with his eyes staring, fixed as if in a fit; but he was not in a fit.

Slowly his eyes recovered the power of motion, and began to roll fearfully round the room. Then his features relaxed; the power of articulation returned; he drew a deep breath, and said, "Good heavens! and what did you do?"

"Do! Sent him about his business, to be sure. What else should I do?"

At this he seemed to gather a little courage, and, sitting up in the chair in which he had fallen back, he said, "You were satisfied it was not he?"

"How could it be he?" she answered testily. "Don't we know he has been dead these four years?"

"We saw it in the newspapers, and heard it from the India House, certainly," said her husband; "but we had no positive evidence, no absolute, undeniable assurance."

"Positive evidence! absolute, undeniable assurance! Stuff! The ship went down, and all on board perished. I should think that was positive evidence; absolute, undeniable assurance, enough to convince any reasonable man. Why, what are you thinking of, you——" (fool, she could have almost said). She was growing very much alarmed, and porportionably angry at this sort of hesitation upon his part. "You're not going to play the game of an infamous impostor, with your doubts and your hesitations, Mr. Wilmington, are you? We *know* he is dead; and there's an end of it."

"What did he look like?" said he again, in a terrified

manner, glancing round the room, as if he expected the apparition of his drowned friend to appear.

"Look like! how can I tell? Like anybody else, to be sure; nothing particular. I didn't look at him very much."

"But was he like? was he like? You've seen him, Lizzy; he was an old acquaintance of your father's before he went to India: you were old enough to remember him. Now, was it like him? Was it like what you remember of him?"

"Not the least bit in the world: as unlike him as possible."

At this he breathed more freely, and sat down again; for in his earnestness he had started from his chair.

But still his restless anxiety required more satisfaction.

"I wish you would tell me all," he said; "and, as nearly as you can, what he *did* look like."

"My goodness, Mr. Wilmington! how strange you are! It would seem as if you were quite unwilling to take my positive word for it, that if ever there was an impudent imposture attempted in the world, this is one."

"I dare say; I don't doubt. Heaven forbid I should doubt!" said he to himself. But he grew paler and paler every minute, and panted terribly.

She paused a little before she began to comply with his request; then she assumed a serious air, and said—

"Now, Mr. Wilmington, tell me at once, can you be so absurd as to wish this to be true? Or can you be so madly generous as to run the risk of acknowledging an impostor?"

"If he is so very unlike the man he pretends to represent, there is no risk of his imposing either upon me or others," he said.

"Why, I don't say he is so very, very unlike as all that," she answered, hesitatingly. "I am sure *I* could detect him in a moment, and dare swear he is the most impudent pretender in the world; but I am not quite, quite sure other people—people who didn't much care about it—would be as positive as I am," said she.

"You don't! What is he like, then? For heaven's sake tell me at once! How am I to know what to do, if you keep tormenting me in this manner? Is he tall or short?"

"Rather short."

"Fat or thin?"

"Why, thin to be sure."

"Florid or bilious?"

"A little, withered, stooping, bilious-looking beggarman, if you will have it; as lean as a skeleton, and his clothes almost in rags; looks as if he had not had a new coat or a

good meal these seven years. That's how he looks, if you will have it."

"Did he ask to see me?"

"To be sure he did, and I am persuaded will never rest till he *has* seen you. He knows you better than I do, I perceive," she added, in a taunting tone. "I could not have believed in such gross folly. I verily think you're half-inclined to acknowledge him now: you really seem to wish to see him, I declare."

For all reply, Mr. Wilmington shaded his face with his hand and sighed deeply.

And, oh that the hour should have come when he should wish that friend dead! that friend whom he had so loved, and who had so loved him, and had trusted in him, and enriched him; and whom at one time he had hoped to welcome home to enjoy the abundance of their several possessions together. And if it should be he! Great heaven! if it should! What would become of him?

Thus he sat, his face covered, such thoughts crowding through his mind. It was his better moment: the most worthless have such.

If it should be he! What must he do? Cast himself at his feet; confess what he had done; renounce his ill-gotten wealth ——?

"I wonder at you," said his lady, after he had sat thus some time. "I cannot help perceiving, by the way you take it, that you are not determined to crush this absurd tale at once. I tell you it is false: I am certain, positive, as sure as I stand here—(oh, woman! woman!)—that it is false. I know you, and I know the world. It is a sort of thing that, if you parley with, and hesitate about, and inquire into, and in the remotest degree admit the possibility of, you'll have the whole world upon you at once; the hasty, spiteful, envious world. And then it will be too late to be convinced yourself that it's all a scandalous lie. Nobody will believe you, or everybody will affect to disbelieve you; and though you may keep what you've got from going to those that have no claim upon it but through this villanous deception, yet what'll be the use? You'll be miserable, because Estcourt and Jones, and the whole pack of them, who envy and hate you, will be upon your back about it."

"What would you have me do?"

"Do as I do!" cried she with energy; "disbelieve it yourself, and then it's easy enough to know what to do. Deny it positively; but, above all" (lowering her tone, and speaking resolutely and calmly), "I advise you not to see him.

Don't parley with him; don't see him; say what is true: that you know Mr. Craiglethorpe is dead, and that you are not going to bother yourself with the unfounded tales of every daring pretender who wishes to impose himself upon the world for him."

So she talked, till she almost led her versatile husband into the persuasion that the man whom he could not help looking upon as Mr. Craiglethorpe was the impostor she pictured him to be.

He began to juggle with himself; to begin by hoping it was as she said, then to feel almost sure, and then to say to himself that he was quite sure.

Quite sure, without doubt. But how came it, then, that, being so perfectly sure as he said he was, he shrank from and avoided all inquiry into the case, instead of searching out and punishing this infamous attempt, as he and she called it? You never asked your conscience that question, Mr. Wilmington!

CHAPTER V.

I would have formed
Some being to respond my aspirations:
To watch time's moments, felt as they rushed by;
Some eye to lighten up to mine: some face,
Record of undecaying memories.—T. E. Reade.

With spirits depressed to a degree which he never, in the whole course of his life, had known before, Mr. Craiglethorpe, having discharged his hackney-coach, pursued his way to town on foot. He walked on in a confusion of thought and feeling; the whole of what had happened seemed to him like a bewildering dream.

Was it possible? Could he be the same man, the man who had some eighteen years before travelled along that very road, through scenes so little altered—for that side of London has seen fewer changes than any other—on the way to the house of his young, gay friend, where he was ever sure of a cordial welcome; where, among troops of gay and jovial men, he was always the first man in the company, the favoured friend, the important person; where he had at once enjoyed that in which his soul delighted—the consequence and consideration attendant upon the possession of wealth, and the pleasure, which he had heart enough to feel, of enjoying the respect and affection of his friend? For he had a heart, this worshipper of Mammon. He did not himself know how feeling a heart; and certainly no one upon earth suspected him of possessing it. It showed its existence, too, in strange ways; but other hearts besides his have been so mismanaged by early rearing, and so mishandled upon the part of their possessors, that they manifest their existence only by bitterness: the bitterness of resentful, or suspicious, or jealous, or revengeful feeling. There must be some better influence acting upon the heart before its sensibility becomes the source of goodness and love.

And was it true? Could it be possible? Had he again crossed that threshold, again entered those well-known doors; that home to which, through all his difficult and painful wan-

dering, he had looked to as his haven: a haven where affectionate and hearty welcome, gratitude for confidence and kindness received, and a joyful restoration of his property, awaited him? Could it be possible? Had he entered it a beggar, to be dismissed as a beggar? But then a ray of comfort broke in upon the dreary wilderness of his thoughts. Ay, dismissed; but by whom? By a shallow, heartless young woman: he had known her as a girl; he had never liked the forward, saucy, affected, mincing child; her very face, dress, gestures, words, showed that she had grown up into what she might have been expected to grow up—a vain, affected, heartless woman.

That she did not recollect him was not very wonderful; that, being in doubt, she decided at once against him, might be natural enough; but what was she? He felt more cheerful; his spirits began to rise as these thoughts occurred as he went along. He had not the slightest apprehension of meeting with any difficulty in proving his identity; and though his faith even in the affection of Wilmington had been a good deal shaken by the treatment he had received, now his thoughts had taken another turn, his confidence began to be restored, and he resolved early the next morning to return to the house, see one of the servants, learn where Mr. Wilmington was, and follow him at once to whatever place that might be.

So he thought it better not to leave the neighbourhood, but to turn in for the night at the first public-house which presented itself.

His dress and look were not of a sort to command much respect or attention in such places. However, that was a matter to which he was perfectly indifferent. There never was a man so indifferent to all the comforts of life. The hardest bed, the closest and smallest room, the coarsest fare, it was all one to him. Then why was he so indefatigable to acquire, so greedy to possess, riches? To gratify his pride alone. And I think I prefer this motive, bad as it is, to that of mere selfish, personal indulgence.

He entered the tap-room, sat down upon a bench, called for bread and cheese, and, as far as creature comforts were concerned, was perfectly satisfied.

The fire blazed briskly, for the evening was cold; and several men, sitting round the hearth, gossipped together, and discussed the different characters of the gentlemen who lived in the neighbourhood.

One after another, these personages, so eminent in their own conceit as to be above responsibility, as they thought,

and almost above censure, were discussed with that shrewd good sense and caustic humour which belong to our genuine Saxon. From this subject they passed to the last flower-show at Chiswick, and began to dispute whose gardener it was that got the gold, and whose the silver medal.

"Why," said one, "it was Mr. Cheadle, the gardener at Wimbledon Place, as carried off the gold medal for the finest pines, and he came in second for roses. I know he did, and that's how you've confused yourselves; for he got both a gold and a silver medal. He always does carry away a prize. His master and missis, as they tell me, would be in a pretty huff if he didn't. And, to be sure, considering the power of money that Wilmington and his missis spend about their garden, it's not to be wondered at."

"That Wilmington always must have everything of the best, cost what it will," remarked another; "and how he contrives it I can't guess. There's been talk of his being ruined *dead* many a time and oft; and once I believe it was true. But some men are like corks: do what you will, you can't keep 'em under water."

"Reason enough," said a third, "that Wilmington should get to the top this time. Why, did you never hear of his good luck?"

"I heard he got a large fortune left to him."

"Sure enough did he. Did you never hear the particulars?"

"No, never. How should I? I don't know Mr. Wilmington, nor any of his servants; not even Mr. Cheadle, which is odd, and I a gentleman's gardener myself."

"Well," continued the other man, who was one of those frequenters of public-houses whose delight it is to have a story to tell, and to get a listener in any way; "I'll tell you all about it, for I happen to know something of the family. You must know there's two children—Master Harry, the son, and Miss Caroline, the daughter; and sweet children they both were when they were little ones, only Master Harry was rather ugly, and Miss Caroline as brown as a gipsy. But no matter for that. The great Welsh heiress, Miss L——, took a fancy to the cut of Master Harry's face. Some say he gave her love-powder. How should I know? But it's queer how some people manage to make riches flow in. Wherever there's money to be got, such like get it; and that's the case with these Wilmingtons. They've got the fairy pocket, some say: spend as they will, it's always full."

The old gentleman in tattered clothes now called for a pipe, and, drawing near to the fire, began to smoke, his eyes fixed

upon the fire, and as if he were intent upon watching shapes in the embers. He did not appear to be listening to anything which passed, but he missed not a word as the story-teller went on.

"Master Harry, as he used to be called—Mr. Henry Wilmington, as folk call him now—has always been a puzzle to me," he pursued, looking very wise; and as his audience began to increase, for the company closed their chairs round and fixed their eyes attentively upon him, he evidently took pleasure in adorning his story with a greater variety of details than he had at first intended—"has always been a puzzle to me. To look at him, you'd think him a sweet-tempered, rather dull-looking, very shy, and somewhat awkward young gentleman; not the least sharpness nor smartness about him in the world; and yet, some way, he's managed to feather his nest pretty well; ay, and his father's nest, too, for they're mighty close friends, father and son; quite thick together, as one may say. People seemed to think old Wilmington was a sharp hand; but the young one, in my opinion, beats him out and out. 'The still sow sucks the broth.' Ha, ha!"

"Well?" said the expectant and attentive audience, to recall the narrator to the point.

"Well, I say, Master Harry for me. First and foremost, he's got that pretty Welsh heiress; and how he's managed, that is a wonder to me, for she'd sights of lovers, as you may be sure she'd have: and he got that friend of his, Selwyn, and he's wheedled him till he's left him every stiver he had in the world."

A pipe fell upon the hearth, and was smashed to atoms. It was Mr. Craiglethorpe's; but he coolly turned to the waiter, and bade him bring another, lighted it, and continued silently to puff away, his back almost turned upon the orator and his company.

"A' must be a sharp lad, as you say; but how could he manage matters, I wonder?" said one, evidently impatient for the story to be continued.

"Why, Selwyn and he went to the same school, you must know; and old Wilmington was always for having him down at the holidays. Sharp enough, that! He was but a pale, sickly sort of a lad; something the matter with his inside, they said; but he was in love with Miss Caroline; but she wouldn't have him, some say; some say she intended, after a bit, if she did no better for herself; certain, she kept him off and on till the poor lad took worse, and one day he died."

The pipe did not fall to the ground this time, but the hand which held it shook. No one, however, cared enough for the stranger to observe him; and, indeed, his eyes closed, and he put his hand over his face, leaned back in the corner of the bench, and appeared to go to sleep.

"Well," said one of the company, "he was no relation to these Wilmingtons, after all. How came they to get the money? Had he no relations of his own?"

"None but very distant ones, as I've heard, except one, and he was a long way off over the seas in India; and he had left him all his money. But now comes the curious part: when the funeral was over, and everybody assembled to read the will, Mr. Mason, the solicitor, comes forward with a will, purporting to have been made about five months before, and leaving all to the uncle, this Mr. Craiglethorpe. Howsoever, up comes Harry Wilmington with a codicil made the very day the poor fellow died, saying as how, his uncle being dead by the newspapers, he leaves all, every penny, to that Harry Wilmington, out and out. Stay! I think the father had the half of it, and Miss Caroline ten thousand pounds to her own share, or so."

"In the newspapers! but was he sure the uncle was dead?"

"Ay, so people said. I happened to be present, for I was then a sort of porter to Mr. Mason, and had carried up his bag; and as the room was full for the reading of the will, I managed to keep in. I like to see how things go on; and of all curious sights in this world, the reading of a will is the one as pleases me best."

It was wonderful how quiet Mr. Craiglethorpe kept all this time; but through the fingers of the hand which covered his face, two small black eyes, keen as those of the basilisk, might be seen peering upon the speaker.

"I remember all their faces well; it was a rare piece of fun to me. Mr. Mason looked so surprised! Master Harry *pretended* to look surprised; you saw he pretended, he was so *very* much surprised, or seemed to be. Mr. Mason bit his lips, took up the codicil, glanced at the signature, and handed it to Mr. Henry Wilmington, saying—

"'I thought I had the honour of possessing Mr. Selwyn's confidence.' Mr. Henry's hand shook as he took the paper; but he did take it, and pointing to the writing at the beginning of the will, held it out to Mr. Mason, upon which that gentleman shook hands with him, wished him joy; and taking up his green bag, left the room, and I followed him in a great hurry, lest he should scold me for being there.

"And so Mr. Harry got his friend's fortune; and in about

half-a-year from that time he was married to the Welsh heiress. And old Wilmington lived away and spent his money like a prince; but Master Harry, bless you, has none of his spirit! he lives like a hermit, I hear, still; he's very mean, they say. His mother was a poor creature in that way, too, I've heard."

"Does Master Harry, as you call him, live any better, now he's got the Welsh heiress?"

"Why, moderate: no money spent down here; at least, they never take a house in town, or have any establishment. Some say they spend their money upon her property in Wales. But commend me to the father; he *has* a spirit! and I wish that young fellow Selwyn, when he was about it, had left it all, out and out, to the old one. But Master Harry was at his pillow, they say, all that day before he died, and never let a soul speak to him, not so much as his old man-servant Charles; and, what's odd enough, Charles had a good legacy in the first will, and his name was never mentioned in the second; but this I must say, the Wilmingtons did handsomely: they paid old Charles just what he would have taken in the first will, down upon the nail. Master Harry persuaded his father to do that."

"But was Mr. Craiglethorpe really dead?"

"Well, I suppose he must have been; for he was known to have embarked in the vessel the 'Sumatra,' and the ship was never heard of more; but what I don't think right of that Harry, and, indeed, what I overheard Mr. Mason say himself upon the subject, was this, that as there must have been a doubt upon the mind of every reasonable man whether Mr. Craiglethorpe would cast up again or no, Master Harry, when he dictated that will, which there is no doubt he did, ought to have put in a proviso, in case Mr. Craiglethorpe did not appear by such or such a time; and that, perhaps, smote upon his conscience afterwards; for I've heard say that he never looked quite himself from that time to this, in spite of his pretty Welsh heiress. But, however, he's getting more easy of late, I hear; for now four years are past, and no news of Mr. Craiglethorpe, except that one of the boats was found upon the coast of Madagascar, stranded: some say that two men got to the Cape of Good Hope; and some say that a bottle has been picked up at sea, saying as how the ship had struck, and the crew taken to their boats, with little hope for life in a raging sea. How that may be I don't know; all I know is, since that time old Wilmington has thrown his money like a prince; and that Mrs.

Wilmington and he keep up the ball mighty well together at Wimbledon."

"And what is become of Miss Caroline? Did Selwyn leave her nothing?"

"Never so much as mentioned her in the codicil, which seemed odd; but her brother must have been in a confounded hurry to get things done, and seemed to forget to do things decently; but she had a legacy, as I told you, under the first will. Old Charles happened to be gone out upon business for his master that day, and so Mr. Henry had it all his own way by his friend's bed-side; and he made the best of his time, you see. Still waters are deep. Who'd have thought that quiet-looking man would have had his wits about him so sharp?"

"Well, it's an odd sort of story," said one and all, "and thank you, mister; and now I reckon it's time to be thinking of going home. What sort of night is it, landlord?"

"Dark as pitch, and rain coming on. What say you to a bowl of punch, gentlemen, before parting?"

"A dry tale wants wetting: heigh, landlord! that's your opinion? No, no; no more; we've all had enough, and our wives will be whetting the edge of their tongues at home, if we don't look sharp."

The company rose; hats and great-coats were donned: one by one they quitted the house, leaving the stranger still asleep by the fire.

When they were gone, he called for a candle in a steady voice, and walked quietly up-stairs; and it was not till he had entered his room, bolted his door, and set his candle upon the hearth, that he yielded to the emotion which shook him to the centre.

CHAPTER VI.

He did not sleep at all that night. Sometimes he walked up and down the room in a perfect extasy of rage and vexation; sometimes he threw himself upon the bed, and closed his eyes, in a vain attempt to tranquillize himself with sleep; then he would start up again, stung by fresh recollections, and would pace the room as before.

Selwyn then was dead, the only relation he had in the world, the only being save one that he had ever cared for; and *that* one ——!

There was nothing so very, very wicked, after all, supposing Harry had been assured of his death, in endeavouring to secure his friend's fortune for his father and himself: for, in truth, to whom would it go? There was not a relation in the world to claim it. It might probably be exhausted by suits with claimants, or go at once to the crown; yet there was a meanness against which Craiglethorpe's whole soul revolted, in thus taking advantage of the dying moments of a friend. And then the base ingratitude of both, in leaving his name completely out, and never providing for the possibility of his return! It wounded him even more than the loss of this fine inheritance vexed and disappointed him. Selwyn ought not to have forgotten him thus, for he had been so kind to Selwyn; but, probably, poor fellow, so near his approaching end, he had little power of consideration left; but the other! —— after all the friendship he had felt and shown for the father! He would not believe that Harry could be perfectly assured of his death: feeling alive, knowing he was alive, it required a much greater stretch of candour than he was inclined to exercise, to realise the fact of such an absolute conviction in Henry's mind. The more he reflected, the more he suffered himself to be convinced that Henry could *not* have overlooked this possibility, but that he purposely left his name out, that he might, in any event, secure to himself the undisturbed possession of this large fortune. And

as these thoughts presented themselves, he was thrown into a transport of rage, indignation, and disappointed feeling, which may be likened to the passion of poor, abused Lear.

With the injustice very common to men under the influence of such passion, his anger against the son spread in some degree to the father. Though convinced that Mr. Wilmington was perfectly innocent of prompting this will, he confounded him, in some degree, with his son; and it was with changed and irritated feelings that, as the day at last broke, he rose from his bed, resolving to search him out without delay, and force from him at least all that property transmitted from India, which no circumstances could deprive him of.

The night spent by Mr. Wilmington in his gorgeous sleeping-room was not more comfortable than that of his once friend in his sordid chamber. He found it impossible to snatch a moment's rest.

The past, the irretrievable past, rose up before him, to torture with regret and remorse; poignant regret, such as the ruined spendthrift feels when the long array of sums actually flung away is presented to his memory, half the amount of which spared would have ensured present security and permanent happiness; remorse such as the most hardened heart is awakened to when the day of reckoning is close at hand, and can no longer be put aside, and banished obstinately from the thoughts.

However Lizzy might endeavour to persuade him, however much he longed ardently to believe in what she said, he found it impossible. That Mr. Craiglethorpe still lived, and had returned to England, he felt certain, and a cold shudder ran through his veins at the thought.

His wife went to bed and fell asleep. She had settled the matter with herself, and trusted that she had persuaded, and ridiculed, and taunted, and, in short, driven her husband into the conclusion she had determined upon his adopting: so, very much tired with the excitement of the day, she lighted her candle and went away to her room.

Mr. Wilmington was left alone.

And then, not the phantom dagger of the age of violence, but phantoms as expressive of what constitutes the wrong,

and the burden, and the temptation, and the wickedness of our present life, rose up before him. Long arrays of figures. One hundred thousand pounds! That sum seemed written in characters of fire, stamped upon his brow. Wherever he turned his thoughts, that stood before him: one hundred thousand pounds!

What was become of it?

Not one farthing of it left. All gambled away in a reckless speculation. The first profits made by this manner of tossing about a large sum, risking it upon perilous speculations, spent; profits apparently doubling the original investment; and then, as we have lately to our shame experienced, a sudden depreciation of the property, and a few useless bits of paper all that remained.

The profits, as we have seen, had immediately been spent in Mr. Wilmington's lavish housekeeping. Now, all was gone. What he was spending at present was the income derived from Selwyn's fortune, and that was fast melting away in his hands.

How should he meet Mr. Craiglethorpe?

And yet, after all, he *had* invested the money; he had the *coupons* to show; he had his permission to make use of it for his own benefit; and in this very speculation he had done so. Where was the blame?

Oh! he knew very well where was the blame; and the ingratitude, and the dishonourable way in which he had taken advantage of the *letter* of the trust, to betray the sense of it, and in order to realise exorbitant gains by the use of the money, had risked it in a hazardous speculation, and lost it.

That scene with Harry rose to his recollection: the pathetic tone of voice, the pleading look with which he had urged—

"So generous a reliance! so great a confidence! Oh, sir! ——"

But there was more; more than this. Even these thoughts could not have blanched his cheek with appalling terror, or have made him, from time to time, as he paced the room, look round him like a man inclined to fly.

The silence of the house, the echo of his own footsteps in the lofty drawing-room, at length seemed to become insupportable to him. He took up his candle, and having gone to his dressing-room, taken off his coat, and put on his *robe de chambre*, stiff with brocade, he proceeded to his own apartment.

Whether he hoped to find his wife awake, to gather fresh

courage from her assurances, or some little crumbs of comfort from her society, I know not; but she slumbered profoundly, and he would not awaken her.

He stood some time by the bedside looking at her.

She was very beautiful when her eyes were closed, and as she lay there with that fine fair hair of hers dishevelled round her face and upon her pillow, he perhaps had never seen her more beautiful. But he gazed at her without pleasure. Her beauty had lost its power, and a cold, comfortless feeling seemed to take possession of his heart. She had shared in his splendour, had gratified his vanity, and they had enjoyed his success together; but now, when he felt that the dark hour was approaching, that trouble and perplexity were gathering round him like thick clouds, and that something still more fearful loomed in the distance, he could hope and look for no comfort from her.

She had had but one expedient to propose the night before; namely, obstinate disbelief in the identity of one of whose personal identity he could not bring himself to entertain a doubt.

If he awakened her, if he confessed—for he longed intensely to communicate his distress, and obtain support and encouragement from some one—if he did this, what should he meet?

He knew well what he should meet.

Taunts instead of sympathy, reproaches for advice, lamentations over her own unhappy destiny, instead of generous grief for his. He turned away more thoroughly alone because he was not alone; more miserable because in the presence of one who ought to, but would not, or could not, comfort or assist him.

The reflections of the night had, however, determined Mr. Wilmington to take his wife's advice, and absent himself for a few days from home, in order to give himself time to arrange his thoughts and consider what steps to take.

After a nervous, sleepless night such as I have described, he had, as soon as he heard his household stirring, rang his bell, and ordered his carriage to be in waiting at ten o'clock, when he should have finished his breakfast; and he was now still in his dressing-gown, engaged in superintending

the proceedings of his valet, and giving directions about the choice and packing up of his clothes: a matter of too much importance with him ever to be performed wholly by deputy.

He was walking about his dressing-room in a dawdling manner, sometimes lolling out of his window which looked to the front of the house, for the morning was particularly sweet and fine, and he enjoyed the fresh air at an hour to him so unusually early, sometimes loitering to the place where his man was engaged, then again returning to the window and looking out.

He heard the latch of the wicket by the side of the great iron gates click, and supposing it to be one of the gardeners coming from breakfast, he leaned out a little farther, as he saw a figure half-hidden by the trees coming up the walk, as he wanted to give the man some directions before his departure. The man was hidden from him, as I said, by the light waving branches of the trees, through which he could just discern what appeared to be a working dress.

"Hallo!" cried he, as the figure paused and seemed turning to go some other way. "Come hither, I want to speak a word with you."

And Craiglethorpe stepped from behind the trees.

He looked up; their eyes met; they knew each other in a moment!

Craiglethorpe, quickening his pace, turned rapidly to the hall-door and rang the bell.

Mr. Wilmington retreated hastily, shut down the window, and shook in every limb as the hall bell sounded through the galleries.

"He didn't see that I saw him; he couldn't;" thus he would fain have flattered himself. He stood, irresolute what to do. There was a knock at the door.

"The man who was here last night," said a footman's voice in the passage, "is at the hall-door asking for Mr. Wilmington."

"Say I'm not at home; I'm busy; I know nothing about him; I can't see him. He's a troublesome fellow; tell him to go away."

In a hurried, stuttering manner this was said: the valet, a foreigner, raised his quick sly eyes, glanced at his master, shrugged his shoulders, and went on packing.

"What a d—d time you take about it, sir!" said his master, in an irritated, impatient tone, coming up to the place where his trunk stood, with the valet kneeling before it; "do you mean to keep me here all day?"

The footman mean while had returned to the hall-door; but again the stranger had forestalled him. He found Mr. Craiglethorpe had already entered the house, and was in the act of putting down his hat upon the hall table. Seeing the footman enter, he turned, and thus accosted him:—

"I need not ask you, young man, whether your master is at home, for I saw him. Where shall I find him. Up-stairs?" And he was proceeding to the back hall, in which the stairs were.

"No, sir; not that way, sir. I beg your pardon, sir; you can't go in there. Mr. Wilmington's not at home, sir; not at home, I assure you, sir."

"You lying rascal! I saw him leaning out of his window not five seconds ago, and he spoke to me himself."

"I beg your pardon, sir, when we are bid to say, 'Not at home,' *that's* of no manner of consequence. My master bade me say, 'Not at home,' himself; and after that we answer no further questions."

"Bade you say not at home to *me?*"

"And why not, sir?" looking at him with a somewhat insolent and familiar stare; "why not, will you be pleased to say? I've seen master not at home to a lord before now. So come, my good fellow; better budge! This hall's no place for such as you; and I tell you, once for all, Mr. Wilmington won't see you this morning. He's busy, and he said he wouldn't."

"Not see me? Why, he *has* seen me, I tell you. Am I so changed? And yet he knew me? I am sure he knew me! This puppy is making a mistake. Yes, it's the old place; he's in his dressing-room."

Thus he kept muttering to himself, and again endeavoured to enter the back hall.

But the footman planted himself at the entrance, and stretching out his arms with an air of determination, repeated he was "not a-going for to let such as him pass through there, and he had better take himself off."

"You impudent puppy! I tell you, you've mistaken your orders. Your master saw me himself as I was coming up the gravel walk. There's some mistake, I am certain. Go and tell him that his old friend—— Stay! take that to him"—hastily taking out a scrap of paper, and writing a few strange marks upon it—"he'll remember me now."

"Then, if I go you'll promise to stay here till I come back, for I can't have you going rummaging all about the house when my back's turned, or what'll missis say? There'll be a pretty commence if you're not here when I come back."

"I'll wait."

The young fellow went away. The old man re-entered the front hall, looking round in a sort of imploring, piteous manner. He did not look to God for assistance when he felt as if his old heart was almost bursting with various emotions. He had no God; he had never denied and blasphemed Him as a speculative, atheistic philosopher might have done, but he had forgotten Him. He had suffered the thorns and briers of this world to grow up and obscure the image altogether. In the bitterness of his soul he could not turn to God.

But that one look he cast round was piteous.

You must pity the man. Remember, he had never been taught better things. One generous, disinterested, tender affection he had cherished in his bosom: it was being cruelly crushed. You must pity his pangs. We must have pity for all sufferings of the heart; most of all in those who are without consolation beyond this world, who know of nothing better. Then he went to the window and looked out.

How the trees were grown and changed! They were now, from small shrubs, become large plantation trees; but he could not look at them, changed as they were, without a rush of memories of what he had been in that house in times gone by.

The footman was long in returning; at last he came, and brought the scrap of paper in his hand.

"Master knows nothing about you. Doesn't know what you mean by the things here on the paper. Sorry he can't see any one; positively busy; is going out."

But this time Mr. Craiglethorpe was too quick for the servant; he did not wait to hear the sentence finished, but passing him, hastily mounted the stairs with hurried steps, laid his hand upon the well-known dressing-room door, opened it, and entered.

The valet had left the room, but in his place Mrs. Wilmington was standing, talking earnestly to her husband. The door opened; they both turned round: she gave a faint shriek; he turned deadly pale, but stood still.

"Wilmington! is it you who refuse me an entrance into your house?" Craiglethorpe began, with an accent of melancholy rather than angry reproach. "You, Wilmington!"

"Who are you, sir?" cried Lizzy, placing herself between him and her husband, casting a glance, as she did so, at the latter, which said, "Now be firm, or you are lost for ever."

"Woman! stand by," said Craiglethorpe, advancing; "how dare you put yourself between him and his old friend? Why,

Wilmington," holding out his hand, "you have not surely forgotten me?"

But Wilmington was silent. He looked nervous, hurried, confused, uncertain; but he made not a movement to accept and clasp the hand thus offered.

"Wilmington!" and he went close up to him; "old friend!" and he laid his hand upon his shoulder. "Nay, lad, what's the matter; for, sure I am, you know me?"

"He does not, sir," interrupted Lizzy; "he's petrified at your audacity. To be sure, loving Mr. Craiglethorpe as he did, it can't but be very painful to have an impostor ——"

"Impostor! D——n you, woman! you know me as well as I do myself."

Passion was awakened at last.

He shook the shoulder he held, and cried—

"Come to your senses! speak out! Let us have done at once. If—may heaven forgive me if I am unjust!—if —— Good God! what am I saying? If—Wilmington! Wilmington! —— If—if—speak, only speak; say you won't! say you daren't! What! after all—all ——"

"Can't you speak? won't you speak, Mr. Wilmington?" cried Lizzy, angrily. "What do you stand there for as if you were turned to stone? Speak, tell this old man ——"

He could not speak; he could only turn away to release his shoulder from the grasp of his friend, and cover his face with his hands.

His wife followed him, whispering her remonstrances in his ear; urging every suggestion she could think of to confirm him in her purpose. There was a door which opened to her bed-room. She took hold of his arm, and led, or rather pushed him through it. He suffered her to do as she would; and she closed the door after him.

"There," she said, returning with something very like triumph in her face; "*there:* I hope this scene is ended; and now, sir, that you see how excessively painful this farce, which you are pleased to play, proves to my husband's feelings, perhaps you will be good enough to put an end to it."

He was a stout-hearted, hard-nerved man. He had never in his life, perhaps, known what it was not to be perfectly master of himself under the most trying circumstances; but he stood there now perfectly bewildered, amazed, confounded, his ears tingling, and his spirit faltering; something arose to his eyes—an unwonted visitor; he dashed it away with the back of his hand.

Then he glared, rather than looked, upon that hard-

hearted, beautiful, bad creature; then he stopped to listen. He thought to have heard his friend's returning steps; there was only that little door between them, but they were severed, oh! far more widely than if it had been a hemisphere. Will he relent and come back? Can he have the heart to stay away?

He resisted the urgency with which she kept pressing, commanding, insisting upon his going. He kept pushing her aside impatiently with his elbow, which said, as plain as elbow could, "Be quiet; hold your noise!" Then he stood stock-still and listened again.

The expression of his face was strangely touching.

At last he approached the door. She would have prevented him, but he shook her off.

"Wilmington!" he said, and laid his hand upon the lock,

The key turned within.

"Wilmington! you are there! Speak!"

Silence.

"Wilmington, speak! It is the third and last time. Speak now, or I swear this is the last time I will ever speak to you more, till we meet together at the day of judgment."

Silence.

He still stood and listened; but he had sworn, and would not speak again.

He seemed unwilling to take his hand from the lock; unwilling to sever this tie, so close, so strong. His face worked strangely; his colour changed: now a dark lurid red, now deadly pale. He hesitated; he shook the lock. At last he knelt down and looked through the key-hole. The key was in.

He would not be satisfied. It seemed as if he could not bear to believe that Wilmington was still in the room; that he could have heard him; that he had not escaped by some other door.

But she set him right as to that.

"You need not make any doubt about *that*," said she, seeming to understand him; "for he is there. The other door is fastened. And I think the best thing you can do is to take yourself away."

Again he shook the lock with violence.

Again he listened; but he would not speak.

Then he looked round the room, as if taking leave of everything there.

Upon the dressing-table stood a very rare piece of Japan china, a present in former days from himself. This was the only article connected with the memory of former days that

was still in the room. He took it up, and, before she could interfere, threw it out of the window, and then, without turning his head again, went out of the room and down stairs, crossed the two halls, and so out of the house.

He was seen to look up at the house again as he walked slowly down the gravel road.

And I have been told his eye lowered, as if a blast came from it. I fear that, in the bitterness of his spirit, he cursed it and its inmates, and them and theirs, wheresoever they might be.

The curse was the more vengeful because it found no vent in words.

And words would be vain to endeavour to describe the deep, the incommunicable bitterness of his resentment. It was deep as were his feelings, bitter as was his temper, immeasurable as was his pride. His faults and his qualities united to give it force. It remained henceforward the sole feeling of a blighted heart; all that seemed to remain of the images impressed there by a life of five-and-sixty years.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Craiglethorpe walked slowly down the public road; and as he walked, the effervescence of his excited feelings began to subside, and to harden down, as it were, into a cold, enduring sentiment of deep, unmitigable resentment. I do not think there was that desire for revenge which would have animated a warmer nature. Revenge is a passion, and this man was passionless. The feeling he had was almost the more miserable to himself, and even, if possible, the more in opposition to all the Christian spirit demands, than that sense of "wild justice," as Lord Bacon calls it, would have been. I think, if he had desired to punish, he would have felt more naturally and warmly at least; and after he had punished, or even after he had figured to himself the possibility of having punished, there might have been softenings and relentings of the heart; there might have been regret, perhaps remorse, for the unforgiving temper which had caused suffering to the man he had once loved so well.

But there was no softening influence of this kind; nothing to awaken him to better thoughts: he neither wished to punish nor to revenge: in fact, it was not in his power. He might have imagined himself revenged, and Wilmington punished and suffering; and the very imagination of such a thing, the very picture presented to the mind, might, as I say, and would, in some degree, have had its effect on his feelings; but there was nothing of the kind. The turn his feelings took was different; perhaps in one sense better, but far more really dangerous: that of deep, immoveable, passive resentment; resentment settled, hardened, petrified round the heart; that sort of resentment under the influence of which a man says, "I forgive, but I cannot forget;" and he neither forgets nor forgives. He listens no more to palliation or excuse; the humblest submission is henceforth without avail; "All very well now," or some such hopeless sentence.

His resentment becomes henceforward a part of himself, and is never to be mitigated, far less conquered.

This is a fearful change in a man's character, and the more deeply to be lamented because it mostly takes place in those of strong moral sensibility, and capable of acute feelings of affection or love. It is like many others of the most terrible faults; the more terrible because it is the growth of natural qualities which, rightly directed, would have been as powerful for good as they are now fatally perverted to evil.

All that was good in the unhappy Mr. Craiglethorpe's character—his strength of will, his clear perception of right and wrong, the high imaginations which under all this mine of mammon lay concealed, and the tender affection of which he was really capable, all militated against him, because the Divine Master, whose most earnest exhortation it was to forgive; He who in his wisdom knew how dangerous, how fatal, to all that is best in man is a long-cherished resentment, was no master of his.

In a Christian land, a baptised man, with the Gospel of love and truth upon his shelf, he never opened the page; he never said a prayer; he never listened to the Word of Truth; he lived, as so many live among men, a mere animal life, if I may so say: I mean as entirely and blindly governed by his moral instincts as the brute creation are by their animal ones.

Never pausing, never considering, never taking account with himself; absorbed in the relations of the life of to-day, and utterly regardless; never thinking of his relations with the future and the higher life with that Being, the closest and the nearest to us all of any being, his Creator, his Father, his holy Lord; ignorant as the veriest savage of everything relating to self-conviction, self-formation, self-edification; the rearing up through the course of this life of a loftier, a better, a purer self; prepared for a loftier, a wider, a better system of being.

Unfortunate, more perhaps than blameworthy (for let us compassionate, and not judge); most unfortunate that no one in the days of his childhood and youth, those precious days of indelible impressions, had taught these things to him. Cast upon life's theatre a motherless, undirected boy, with no one to awaken that within which might have been developed to a fine perfection.

See him there, walking along, hardening, as I said, petrifying, his heart turning to stone; all his better qualities withering away under the blight of this deep, bitter, resentful feeling.

He had not walked long in this way before, with a mind so habituated to business considerations as his, the remembrance of his almost empty purse began to present itself, and the more substantial features of his unpleasant situation to mingle with those which belonged to sentiment.

He put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a few dollars, all that he possessed at present in the world. He could not reasonably fear that he should not be able to prove his identity beyond question; yet there was a bewildering sense of uncertainty and doubt cast over his mind by Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington's absolute refusal to acknowledge him, when he felt morally certain that they knew him perfectly. Indeed, it was impossible but that Wilmington must have recognised the secret signs he had sent to him upon the paper.

To prove identity to those willing to yield to evidence, and happy to acknowledge the conviction when obtained, is one thing; to force the confession from those resolved to deny their own convictions, however strong, another.

Would all, then, with whom he had to do find it their interest to deny the hapless stranger, thus, after so many years of suffering and difficulty, restored to his country? And their interest being thus engaged, would there no one be found with honour and principle enough to receive him as what he was?

Craiglethorpe was a man of suspicious temper: his converse had been chiefly with men intent upon gain. He had seen too much of the shuffling and the overreaching, and the unfair advantages taken so often by men who live with the acquisition of wealth as their principal aim and prime good, not to have a bad opinion of the world; he had in his cynical way often sneered at the sorrow of the mourner for those who are gone, and said, "If the dead were to return, do you think anybody would be glad to see them?" He was now about to prove the truth of his own words.

Well-founded or not (and it is not well-founded, this general ill opinion of mankind in the mass), the man who has no confidence in his kind is far more helpless in a position such as this before us, far less protected—though it may seem strange to say so—than he who, with fearless confidence in human nature, casts himself upon what is right and good in his brother's heart, instead of busying himself in seeking protection against what is bad. But to return.

The first thing the man here described felt that he must do was to replenish his purse. Wilmington owed him a large sum of money, one hundred thousand pounds, and that he would claim. But to claim it with any prospect of success,

his identity must be proved; and if his *quondam* friend refused to own him, this proof must be made legally: for this process, money or friends would be necessary; and he, outcast and disowned, had neither.

He began to cast about in his mind, and endeavour to recollect any little credits which he might have in this country, neglected amidst the sum of his great wealth: tens, and twenties, and odd hundreds, here and there. He was not long without remembering several of these, which, in his reliance upon the large sum in store for him in Wilmington's hands, he had never even taken the trouble to call to memory. Among the rest, there were about five hundred pounds lying to his credit in the house of Jones and Estcourt, late Wilmington, Jones, and Estcourt; and his first attempt at being recognised and getting paid should be there.

His adversity had rendered him prudent and frugal, and the exiguity of his purse rendered the utmost parsimony necessary in spending the little money left, till a fresh supply were obtained; so he had determined to walk all the way into the City; but by the time he reached Hyde Park Corner he felt completely knocked up; and anxious to be in possession of all his powers when he presented himself at Jones's counting-house, he took a coach there, and laid out five of his few remaining shillings in being carried to Mincing Lane.

There was something grand in the calmness with which, his first ebullition over, this man bore the reverse of his fortunes, the result of such long habits of self-command that it was scarcely in the power of anything to hurry, and of such long exercise of moral courage in struggling with difficulty, that nothing could daunt him.

In that respect he was a worthy, though usurious follower of the old philosophers; he was not over-anxious, weakly, nervously anxious about his daily bread. No, not when the means for furnishing to-morrow's bread was literally all with which he was provided.

He stopped at the door of the large house in the City where Messrs. Jones and Estcourt carried on their prosperous business; and his pulse did not beat in the least degree quicker, nor his colour change, nor his nerves tremble, at the idea of the denial he anticipated.

He got down from his coach, told the man he need not wait, paid him, and entered the counting-house.

Both Jones and Estcourt were there. Clerks on all sides were busy plying their task, and Mr. Jones sat at his desk investigating an account. Mr. Estcourt was as usual performing his part by talking with some gentlemen on busi-

ness; his back was turned to the door. Craiglethorpe walked into the room, took off his hat, and looked around him before he addressed any one. The clerks were most of them young faces, that he had never seen before, but the head clerk was an old acquaintance; the hair was gray which had been brown, and the hand, once white and delicate, was withered and veined; but Craiglethorpe of course recognised him in a moment, and he just then, lifting up his head, uttered a sudden exclamation, and starting from his stool, gazed, hesitated, gazed again, and then hurrying forward, seized him by the hand, crying, "Is it you? Can it be possible? Do I behold Mr. Craiglethorpe?"

"The same, my good old friend," said Craiglethorpe, shaking him with an earnest warmth by the hand, and the drear solitude of the desert in which he felt as if he were wandering, changing like a dream, and restoring him to his post in life once more. "The same; and heartily glad to see you, Mr. Simpson, looking so well and hearty."

Jones had by this time lifted up his head; and he, too, came forward.

"Bless my soul! will miracles never cease? Bless us all! alive! can it be you, Craiglethorpe? Why, we all thought you dead and gone, these four years back. Well, I'm heartily glad to see you, upon my soul I am! Mr. Estcourt" (and that gentleman turned round), "would you believe it? here's our old friend come back to England, safe and sound: though looking a little the worse for wear: ha, ha!"

"I rejoice in my heart to see you, Mr. Craiglethorpe," was Estcourt's address, cool and impassible as usual; but really, for him, looking quite cordially, and offering his hand; "we gave up every one for lost who sailed in that unhappy 'Sumatra;' for there did not seem a doubt existing that she foundered at sea."

"And so she undoubtedly did," answered Craiglethorpe; "but we some of us got out the boats. The old story: there are some who cannot be drowned, because—heigh, Estcourt? the stale proverb; I am one of those; and here I am, high and dry; but a little—the outer man, at least—somewhat the worse for wear."

And he cast a glance at his threadbare coat-sleeve.

"Well, at all events," said Jones, kindly, "we're monstrous glad to see you alive and kicking. But where have you been all this while?"

"It's a long story that," said Craiglethorpe, entirely restored to himself by this agreeable reception; "and I'll tell it you all in good time; but just at this moment other mat-

ters are rather pressing. You'll guess I'm not particularly well provided at this moment with ready cash, though I've taken good care *all* should not go down in the 'Sumatra.' However, things are not available in a moment of time; and so, to replenish the pocket for to-day, I'm come to you, my good friends. Mr. Simpson, if I recollect right, the last balance left a hundred or two to my credit. Might I trouble you to look if it be not so, and accommodate me, if I am correct, with fifty pounds?"

"Pooh! nonsense, man!" said Jones, good-humouredly. "Balance, or no balance, what does that matter? Mr. Leman, will you be so good as to hand Mr. Craiglethorpe here fifty pounds, upon his note of hand? I know you of old, Craigie; you couldn't eat your breakfast if your pocket were empty; and we've chocolate within ready for you, as soon as that article is accommodated."

"Thank you, Jones! just the same good fellow as ever," said Craiglethorpe, and his eye slightly twinkled; "but I am more methodical than a ledger, you know of old; just do me the favour, Mr. Simpson, to let me know how our account stands."

A huge folio, clasped with brass, was taken down from the shelf, and consulted by Mr. Simpson, wetting his finger, and turning over the leaves rapidly.

"Wilmington, Jones, and Estcourt, with Miles Craiglethorpe. The balance was struck July 10th, 1790. It is in your favour, sir, to the amount of five hundred and thirty-six pounds, fourteen shillings, and threepence three farthings."

"Thank you, Mr. Simpson! please to enter fifty pounds per contra," said Craiglethorpe, coolly; and turning to Mr. Leman, he received fifty pounds from the hands of that young gentleman, counted it, and put it into his pocket. He then turned to his friends again. "And how have you been, Estcourt, since we parted?"

"So, so; pretty well."

"Married yet? but you look as spruce as ever, I declare. Gentlemen, I wonder you're not ashamed of my company," he went on, with his old low laugh, which said and meant so much in general, but now only said that he was restored to himself; his own man again.

"Oh, hang it, single!" was Estcourt's reply; "and you? how is it with you in that particular?"

"Why, only look at me. Do you think such as I don't know better than to buy a wife?" with one of his old sarcastic smiles; "and how should I get one in any other way? Loads to be had for the asking where I've been; but I'm not such

a fool as to want one. But you! you're different; you're a smart fellow; you're a handsome dog; you're a woman's man, Estcourt."

"Not very much of that," said Estcourt, glowing with an air of satisfaction at his well-made and well-dressed self. "Not very much of that; but I'm like you: I've no very high opinion of the sex; I have a certain contempt for a man who suffers himself to be entangled. No allusion to you, Jones. You were, we all know, caught in your calf-days. No disgrace in that; but see what fools and drivellers men must become before they take unto themselves, later in life, young and pretty wives; and who'd take what's old or ugly? The pretty creatures soon get the upper hand of fifteen years older; and when they have taken the reins in hand they drive to the deuce in no time: only see that absurd idiot, Wilmington. But I beg your pardon, Craiglethorpe; he is your particular friend."

"Yes," said Craiglethorpe, quietly, but with an odd look in his face, which neither Estcourt nor Jones, being totally without suspicion, understood.

"We've lost sight of him for some years," put in Jones. "We parted not on the best terms; he swore we'd wronged him, and we were sure he'd hurt us, with his confounded extravagance and nonsense; but I hear he keeps up the ball famously in spite of all. His son, young Harry, has married a Welsh fortune, it seems; and, my stars!" suddenly recollecting himself, "wasn't young Selwyn your nephew?"

"Yes," said Craiglethorpe, briefly as before.

Estcourt was startled into recollection, too, by this remark. The truth is, they had seen and thought so little of Mr. Wilmington of late years, that this peculiar part of Mr. Craiglethorpe's adventures had not come into their minds in the pleasure and surprise of seeing him. Now, Estcourt's sarcastic face assumed an expression of peculiar and malignant pleasure, as he said—

"If what the world says is to be believed, he got a large sum of money there too; but of course now ——"

"I've had no time, of course, to look into matters. I find the poor young fellow dead: that did not surprise me. I knew he was past hope before I left India, and did not the least expect to find him alive. As for his property, we shall see to that; though, thank goodness, I am in a manner independent of it."

"Well, I hope Wilmington, when the day of reckoning comes, will be able to refund," said Estcourt, carelessly; "for he's been leading the devil of a life, I hear."

"He's a thoroughly extravagant good-for-nothing fellow; that's all I know about him," remarked Jones, "and we were well quit of him here. But now let us go into the private room and drink our chocolate; for these young rascals," looking at the clerks, every one of whom sat with his head raised, staring at Mr. Craiglethorpe and listening to the conversation; "these young rascals won't put pen to paper whilst we go on chattering here."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE twopenny-post of the next day brought the following billet to Mr. Wilmington, written upon a shabby scrap of paper, and sealed with a wafer:—

MR. CRAIGLETHORPE TO MR. WILMINGTON.

"I think our account is simple enough, and requires no balancing. In the year 18— I remitted to you one hundred thousand pounds, for the safe arrival of which I had your acknowledgment. I was a wealthy ninny in those days, and believed in honour, and gratitude, and friendship, and such nonsense. I told you to use the money, if you could benefit yourself by so doing, and that I should never ask you for anything but the principal.

"I don't mean to go back from my word, though I *am* so changed that neither you nor your wife knows me. I thank heaven, I'm the same man as regards that: I never shuffled with a promise, and I never will. Please to pay the hundred thousand pounds into the house of Jones and Estcourt, Mincing Lane, as soon as convenient. Happening to have a balance in their hands, and they and their clerk happening to recollect me, I am in no immediate want of cash.

"MILES CRAIGLETHORPE."

The paper fell from Mr. Wilmington's hands, and, turning pale as death, he sank back upon a sofa, and seemed ready to faint away.

His wife ran for some water.

"What's the matter?" said she.

"Matter enough! Fool! idiot that I was!" striking his forehead; "how could I be such a dolt? such a driveller? And you, woman, how could you be so mad as to persuade me?"

"And how could you," said she, for she had picked up the

paper and read it, and looked as pale and frightened as he did; "and how could you be so weak and such a fool as to mind me? *I* didn't know him: how should I? I really thought him an impostor. But it *is* strange, when these Jones and Estcourts knew him directly, that you, his oldest friend, should not recognise him. Why didn't you tell me plainly you knew it was he? Do you think I should have been such a fool as to give you the same advice in that case?"

He was silent. He sat there, bowed down with shame; the cowardly shame of being found out, not the generous shame of awakened feeling.

She went on pouring forth that torrent of exculpatory words which rush from the false mouth when the accuser within is clamouring, though no one without has made an attack.

"Such folly, too! As if I could have believed you would have been guilty of it! Why, if you knew him, everybody else would. And then this Jones and Estcourt; who'd have thought of his going to them, and their recognising him? Not I, when I didn't know him; how should I? But you did: and what, I wonder, is to be done now?"

"Good heavens! woman, will you never hold your tongue?" cried he at last, provoked beyond bearing, and rising from his chair in a passion. "Will you never have done? Why, you false and shameless creature! did you not almost *force* me into your scandalous and absurd plan of disavowing him? Did you not literally push me out of the room, just when my better nature was leading me rightly? And yet, good God! good God!" cried he, throwing up his arms in a piteous manner, "what would have become of me? what should I have done? Oh me! oh me!"

And groaning heavily, he again sank into his chair.

"You use me very scandalously, I'm sure, Mr. Wilmington," said his offended wife; "but that's always the way between man and woman. As soon as ever you selfish creatures have got yourselves into a scrape by your own folly, the first thing you do is to turn round upon your wives. I dare say you feel ready to beat me now. But what I did was for the best; and I don't see that all's lost yet. You may deny the identity still; and who knew him so well as you did? And as to the acknowledgment he talks of, he'd hardly time to receive it before he sailed; and if he did receive it, it must have been just at the time; and who knows but it's at the bottom of the sea, with the ship? He wasn't very likely to bring that, of all things, away in his pocket, at such a time."

"Woman!" said Mr. Wilmington, sternly.

But she met his reproachful glance with an undaunted look.

"If I hadn't still my doubts ——" she began.

"Be quiet, will you, with your doubts and nonsense! It's no use denying it. You wouldn't even suffer me to whisper it to yourself yesterday: recollect that, if you please. If we had looked the matter in the face, and not blinked at it like two fools, we might have considered what was best to be done. But it's not much use playing that game, Lizzy. He's the man; there is not the slightest doubt of it: and if you'd own the truth, you never from the first moment doubted it any more than I."

"And if I didn't," said she, "I wouldn't just go and own that *now;* now that the only excuse you can offer for what's done is your hesitation as to the identity of the man; your fear of wronging your friend by acknowledging an impostor. I should humbly think that might be a better plan than just going and writing yourself down a scoundrel; which, whatever you may please to do for yourself, be kind enough not to do for me. *I* did not recognise him in the least; that I can positively assert, and will do to my dying day, and you may beat me for it, if you like."

"What would you advise me to do, then?"

"Oh, dear! advise! I beg your pardon, my dear; I thought I advised like a fool and an idiot yesterday."

"Pooh! pooh! I beg your pardon, child; but, Lizzy, what did you say? What had I better write?"

"Write just this: that if you had had the least suspicion it was your old friend, you would have received him with open arms; but you did not recognise him, and could not believe in so *miraculous* an escape upon the bare word of a stranger; that as for the money, it is invested (that's true, isn't it?); but you must expect to be satisfied of his identity by his producing your acknowledgment, before you place the coupons in his hands; that those who earnestly desire a thing to be true are more slow to believe, perhaps, than mere indifferent people; but that, if he can but prove himself your friend, you will receive him with open arms. That comes twice over; but never mind. I can't find any other expression that sounds so striking," said she, handing him the paper upon which she had been writing; for she had sat down and penned these words as she was uttering them.

He looked at the paper and sighed heavily; but he had entered upon the evil way, and was so far involved in it that it must have taken a far more courageous effort than it was

in his power to make, to burst through and return to the path of truth and honour.

Poverty, abject poverty; that scaring phantom to weak minds, which urges to many a base and unprincipled deed; poverty, the dread of abject poverty, would have been of itself enough to have stimulated him to perseverance in deceit and falsehood; but there was something more than the mere dread of poverty in that pale, haggard face and trembling hand; something, even to his wife, inexplicable about him.

His terror, his embarrassment, his distress, were so far greater than the occasion, perplexing as it was, seemed to justify. True, he had to refund a very large sum, she knew; and she was not aware that the coupons of the concern in which he had so wrongfully invested it were safe in her husband's hands; but even under the mistaken idea that he would be called to pay down one hundred thousand pounds, she could not understand his excessive terror and distress.

The answer to the letter dictated by Mrs. Wilmington came speedily. It was from a respectable solicitor, well known to every one of the parties, demanding the restitution of the hundred thousand pounds; the acknowledgment of the receipt of which, it is true, had perished in the ship with Mr. Craiglethorpe's other papers, but of which there would not be the slightest difficulty to prove the receipt, as it had been paid into Mr. Wilmington's account at his banker's. The solicitor acknowledged, that in case Mr. Wilmington chose to stand to his denial, there might be a little time required to obtain legal proof; but as for his refusal to recognise Mr. Craiglethorpe's personal identity, that was what, it was hoped, would not be persisted in, as not the slightest doubt upon the subject existed in the mind of any single one of the numerous friends who had seen him.

The answer to this was cautious.

Mr. Wilmington declared his happiness in the conviction that Mr. Craiglethorpe was still living, but expressed no wish to meet him again. He enclosed a copy of Mr. Craiglethorpe's letter, authorizing him to make what use he pleased of the money; and informed the solicitor that the whole had been invested in a certain mining speculation, where it still lay,

and that he was ready to send the coupons, which were in his hands, to any place Mr. Craiglethorpe would choose to appoint. It is needless to trouble ourselves with the correspondence which ensued. Briefly, the coupons were handed over to Mr. Craiglethorpe, who, after a short inquiry, discovered them to be entirely valueless. Not a shilling could be obtained for them in the share-market, and the company had for some time ceased to *pretend* to make a dividend.

Sentiment, old friendship, disappointed affection; such things had soon yielded in Mr. Craiglethorpe's mind to the excitement of money matters, to the old habits of business; and his rage and vexation at finding the money he had counted upon all this time thus reduced to a mere empty bubble, which burst upon the first touch, was indescribable.

But still it found no vent in words.

He took up the coupons, and locked them in his desk, with an expression in his eye which was terrible in its very calmness. The envelope which contained them inclosed a letter from Mr. Wilmington, written in a somewhat different strain from the former ones. In it he expressed his regret at the unfortunate result of the speculation, and enlarging upon the large promises of future advantage held out by the undertaking, said that he had hoped to have handed over to Mr. Craiglethorpe upon his return a doubled capital, instead of the mortifying result which he had been compelled to acknowledge. He added in vague terms a desire to make some compensation for his unfortunate and mistaken views upon this subject, but professed himself at present a poor man. Five thousand pounds, however, he would be happy to pay over to Mr. Craiglethorpe's banker, and trusted he might be able in a short time to do something more, &c.

"The scoundrel!" cried Mr. Craiglethorpe, for the first time giving vent to his fury upon the receipt of this letter. "The insulting rascal! to offer me a dirty five thousand pounds out of the very money he and his infernal, artful son have swindled me out of, while my poor nephew lay dying! Times must be changed, indeed, my masters, before Craiglethorpe would accept your paltry offer. No, not if he were perishing for a morsel of bread! And times must be changed with you, you rascally pretender! before you would have dared to make such an offer to me. Five thousand, when you owe me a hundred thousand pounds! and out of the money which ought to have been mine; which is mine, was mine, would have been mine, but for the confounded tricks of your son. Ay, and who knows what part you may have had in such things yourself? You are capable of anything.

I know you now! I know you both at last? Five thousand pounds from you? Rather sweep the streets first!"

He adhered to his resolution.

He did not quite descend to sweeping the streets; but having collected what little money he could, the whole not amounting to above twelve hundred pounds, he invested it in the funds, and, the interest not being sufficient for his maintenance, he asked for and obtained a place as clerk in the house of his old friends Jones and Estcourt. There, with a sort of stern and placid submission to circumstances, he placed himself; he, the once wealthy Mr. Craiglethorpe, as second clerk under Mr. Stanwell.

It seemed, in the bitterness of his soul, that the additional humiliation of thus entering a counting-house, where he had been known in days so widely different, was acceptable to him. He seemed to take pleasure in nursing his feelings of rage and hatred by thus having his fall and ruin, under its strongest aspect, daily before his eyes.

In vain would the rough, good-natured Jones, in vain would the polished and cynical Mr. Estcourt, endeavour to overlook the distance that now separated them, and treat him upon terms of former intimacy and equality: he would not suffer it. He overdid himself in the assumption of all the submission in tone and manner, &c. expected in a large house of business from the subordinates to their superiors.

He never for one instant forgot his place as second clerk, and he would suffer no one else to forget it. What would have been gall and wormwood to a less proud and vindictive spirit, what would have been bitterest wormwood to his soul under other circumstances, was now pleasant; it seemed some satisfaction to his soured and exasperated feelings thus to feel, and thus to show, to what he had been reduced by his *friend*.

The small, pale, wrinkled man, dressed in a complete suit of brown, his still brown but scanty hair combed demurely over his temples, his figure bent and bowed, might be seen, the earliest of all the clerks, walking of a morning down Mincing Lane, and approaching the counting-house. He would enter, and take his place by Mr. Stanwell's desk, the first and the only one yet arrived, open his books with the utmost tranquillity, and settle himself doggedly to work. From this he never stirred till counting-house hours were over: sitting there writing, without, like the others, lifting his head from time to time to examine any one who might chance to enter; ndefatigable and untiring.

I remember going into that room upon business one day,

and remarking him; for no one could pass him by unnoticed. Every head was raised, and looking about at something that happened to be going on; but his remained, as I said, bent down, so that I could not see his eyes till the head clerk, Mr. Stanwell, happened to address him; and then he lifted up his face.

What a face it was! What a strange character it had! There were lines written there, as if fiery passion had for one brief moment swept across it, and as if a sense ineffaceable of wrong had remained written there. Yet the whole now so resolved, so calm. Stoicism it was not. It did not give you the idea that the feelings had been vanquished or subdued; but that they had been forced down, settled down, in all their first intensity.

I cannot describe such things well; but it was a singular spectacle, and certainly not without interest. Deep feeling, of whatever nature, always touches upon the sublime.

He might, I believe, when counting-house hours were over, be seen going quietly down the streets to London Bridge, then old London Bridge, and no very agreeable place for walking; but here he used to take the only recreation he seemed to allow himself. He would walk up and down, and watch the ships in the river.

He refused every invitation from his former friends, who were numerous, and all very sorry for him, and anxious to show their sense of the treatment he had received by every sort of attention. But he would accept of none. His was that species of pride which can bear every form of humiliation but that of accepting obligations from those once inferiors. This his haughty spirit absolutely refused to do. He was proud of his degradation to a clerk's place, because that was a means of disgracing the man who had reduced him to it; of publishing, as it were, to all the world, the baseness and ingratitude of the Wilmingtons. But farther than this he would not go.

When his walk was over, he retired to very humble lodgings in one of the most obscure streets in the City, where he had taken two rooms, let by a very poor woman, and miserably furnished. Here he spent his evenings, sitting over a small fire in winter, or in summer by the empty fire-place; for he made no difference in seasons, and his chair was never moved from its accustomed spot.

He never amused himself in any way. Books he had never been known, in his best days, to take any pleasure in; and to the newspaper now he seemed equally indifferent. He never looked into it.

He sat there, evening after evening, always alone, and always unemployed; lost, as it would seem, in thought. Sometimes it would seem as if he hardly did think, so quiet and impassible was his face.

He never slept in his chair, as other men in such lonesome circumstances would probably have done: he was remarkably wakeful. He slept little even at night. I have heard the good woman he lived with say, that she used to hear him walking up and down his room many and many an hour after every one had long been gone to rest.

In such a way it was that he bore the sense of his injuries. I believe it was the manner in which he thought he had been overreached by the son, with respect to the will, which exasperated him still more than the ingratitude of the father. There is something in thus being deprived of a just inheritance, which I think irritates men more than any other way of being overreached; partly, I suppose, because the deed is so utterly ineffaceable that nothing can possibly reverse that which the dead have done.

No change of circumstance can affect the will of him whose will upon earth is known no more, and yet whose last act of will is charged with long trains of inevitable consequences, however unjust, however injurious. Whatever the suffering or the disappointment, the undeserved poverty, or, worse, the unjust prosperity which it administers, it is there; it is done; it is irremediable.

People dwell upon these things with unmitigated vexation. That it is irremediable seems only to exasperate such feelings. The heart frets against what would not have been done could the doer return, ay, but for five minutes, to undo his work. It seems impossible to submit with tolerable patience to what arose from mistake, not from well-considered purpose.

And thus Craiglethorpe irritated himself with thinking of what poor Selwyn would have done, could he but have known the truth; of how bitterly he would regret the step he had been persuaded to take, could he only be aware of the present position of his uncle, and the utter worthlessness of those for whose advantage this injustice had been done.

Time, far from allaying, only added strength to these feelings, uncommunicated, locked up, buried, and festering in the heart.

But we will leave this unhappy man for a short time and refresh ourselves with scenes of innocence, worth, and happiness.

CHAPTER IX.

Amid the loveliness of the lovely Welsh mountains the house stands.

It is surrounded by precipices and woods hanging round fantastically, and beautifully tossed and tumbled together. Upon one side of the valley, a white, flashing waterfall comes rushing and foaming down the hill, bursting through the oaken and beechen copse, and falling and splashing and foaming over dark rock and stone, till it reaches the valley, and then, after bursting into innumerable small cataracts, at length seems to settle into a smile, and gently meanders through the green meadows of the opening dale.

At the mouth of this valley, where it widens into a dale, is a most charming picture of rural prosperity and tranquillity. A sweet little Welsh village is scattered among the trees; the houses clambering up the sides of the hill, as it were, and peeping with their white gables, and glancing casement windows, amid the green branches. Every cottage has its garden, its high picturesque hedge full of brier and hawthorn, its moss-grown apple and pear-trees, its cherries shining scarlet under the leaves, its roses, and pinks, and tall hollyhocks and dahlias; its wicket so neat, its bench at the door, its little porch; its thin bed of thyme, its potatoes, its French beans, its currants and gooseberries hanging in profusion. All which I enumerate, to remind you of what you all, with pleasure, must have remarked in the neighbourhood of a large proprietor's abode, where wealth has been received as a charge and a deposit; where it has been spent upon the spot where it was obtained; where the poor have been taught to look up to the landlord as a kind and firm friend; righteous, merciful, and mild, but stern on occasion; whose aim was the diffusion of the true and good, steadily pursued by the successive labour of every day.

Such was the case here, and all was softened, sweetened, beautified, and adorned by the example of one by his side, who loved flowers, and children, and bees, and birds, and happiness, and innocent frolic and joy; and whose love of the beautiful in nature gradually diffused itself like the beams of some fair star, and shed an influence most gentle and benign upon everthing around.

The dale contained some of the finest and richest land on that side of the island; it was laid out in moderately-sized farms, the homesteads of which were visible from time to time, and homestead fields, whether rich green meadows, waving with clover and buttercups and feathered grass, or arable land glowing with yellow corn, bearing equal testimony to the excellent management of the whole.

"Like master, like man," was a proverb exemplified here; for he, though so calm and quiet in his demeanour, was strenuous, industrious, indefatigable in the pursuit of all that was wisest, kindest, best. Better landlord, better master, never existed. His wealth was indeed a rich stream which fertilized wherever it flowed. Kindness, goodness, justice, consideration for others, utter freedom from every form of selfishness or self-seeking; singleness of heart, in the full extent of its deep and exquisite meaning, shone in the countenance, spoke in the voice, was displayed in every action of that excellent and now most happy man.

> His was the generous spirit which, when brought
> Unto the task of real life, had wrought
> Ever upon the plan which, pleased, his childhood thought.

It had been the charm of Harry Wilmington's childhood —for, of course, it is him of whom we speak—thus to realise a life of active tranquillity, if I may call it so. To live retired from the turmoil and bustle of the great world, with that nature, and that God who is best seen in these his beautiful works; to dwell there, not as an idle enthusiast indulging his poetic vein, not in the selfish enjoyment of all those forms of beauty so delightful to his heart, but in its calm repose, feeling but the occasion for a higher activity than the bustle of the world affords: for tranquil depth of thought, for calm consideration of things, for just estimates of what is good and what is evil, stripped of the vain outside under which they so often lie buried and concealed, and for the exercise of that wise but unbounded benevolence which seemed the very master-spring of his being. Seeking real blessings; not merely those of this world, precious as

they are for those who need them, but those far better even than the clean and well-ordered cottage, the blazing hearth, the well-filled cupboard, and the health-rosy flock of little ones; unruffled tempers, sober habits, industry, godliness, and contentment, which, under such right influence, we may rest almost sure will spring up.

He had now been married above three years, and had lived in Wales nearly the whole time since, almost the happiest, as he was almost the best of men.

Never was man more beloved. His unassuming manners, bearing, like the gentle Duncan, his faculties so meekly, his ready sympathies, his kind consideration for every one's feelings, as well as for every one's wants, still more than his generous devotion to the general good, obtained for him that warm attachment of the heart, which many, as good, as disinterested, as benevolent as he, for want of these engaging qualities, had failed to attain. He seemed to escape almost entirely those thorns and impediments which so often embarrass and torment the post of those resolute in good; he seemed to have a faculty of winning affection, almost approaching to adoration in his inferiors; he seemed to move in an atmosphere of love, an enjoyment which is heaven itself to any one: judge then what it must have been to him, with his blighted, stunted, mortified feelings; his affections so checked and thwarted, and perverted and misunderstood; he who used to be so little valued, so little esteemed, so little liked, to find himself thus universally beloved.

His mind was like a calm, clear sea, upon which the halcyon is brooding when the winds have lulled and the clouds have cleared away, and the blue face of heaven is reflected in the waters.

His happiness was extreme in the useful rural life he led, exquisite in the society of his sweet, young wife; and all this enhanced by a deep, reverent, permanent, ever-loving sense of the presence and the guardianship of that great Being, that sublime Existence, without a real living faith and perception of which, the best human life is but a poor, flat, unprofitable tale.

He had early done in this beautiful, quiet, yet peopled retirement, that for himself which, when done early, is *well* done; he had not waited till sorrow, sickness, and old age had weaned him from the world, to offer his heart to God.

He had done it in the bloom of manhood, whilst life was teeming with happiness, and youth and strength beating high in his bosom; whilst his spirits were bright with cheerful anticipations, and everything around and before him was one

tale of happiness; whilst he was full of health and vigour, sheltered, hedged in, as it were, from fear or sorrow; rich, prosperous, innocent, and beloved. He had offered to God an unblemished sacrifice: a free, happy heart.

He had thought much and deeply upon things, now he had the opportunity; and he had seriously strengthened, grounded, and fixed within himself, as a man, the religious feelings which his mother had impressed as a child.

And in this lay the root of his worth. It was this which gave that perseverance, that resolution, that determination after the true good, which rendered his sweet and soft natural temper of such inappreciable value.

I need not tell you that Flavia was gay and happy as the day was long, as happy as a human creature could be. I have, blessed be God! heard other young, happy wives say what she could have said: they almost trembled at their own happiness.

There would have been something wanting to the perfection of this lovely retirement, had it not been for the presence of this gay, sweet creature. She seemed to glance through it as you may have seen a bright butterfly, or gay-coloured bird, suddenly raise the tone of a shady bower of trees. She was the bright spot the artist puts in his picture; the small but beautiful tint which enhances all the rest.

She did this not only to her doting husband, but for everybody: her gaiety seemed to enliven the whole place. Johnson told Mrs. Thrale he loved to see her in bright colours: "insects should be gay." This fair young creature seemed of the same opinion: she loved to be gaily dressed; she loved to have others in bright colours; she gave away red cloaks to the old women, and pink and blue ribbons to the mothers for the children's hats; she it was who led every cottager about her to love flowers: they learned to love them for her sake; their gardens were full of them. Her own garden was a perfect wilderness of beauty, in which she loved to labour with her own hands; and never had she any new and choice plant, but the first thing was to multiply it as fast as possible, that every one might share in the enjoyment. She instituted flower prizes, and her school feasts were the most delightful, fanciful, pretty things you ever saw: such a profusion of fruit and flowers; such bright, pretty things for prizes; such rosy, merry children; a fiddler, and a pipe and tabor, and the little things jumping away, and she dancing among them and looking like the fairy queen.

She hated everything that was dull and dingy: she loved the light and bright; she was a child of light.

She would laugh and say the cold browns, and the dust colours, and the dingy grays, were absolutely immoral colours for the poor; they looked so like dirt; it was quite dangerous to accustom their eyes to them.

Certainly the bright colours she brought into fashion in her village added unspeakably to the beauty of this green, bowery landscape.

Caroline lived with them.

Flavia loved Caroline tenderly, and honoured and revered her as we know of old; and neither the love, nor the honour, nor the reverence, had at all diminished. Caroline was still the same: that fine, noble, lofty creature, with those large dark eyes, so calm, and that figure, so commanding, it would have been too lofty, only that there was not the slightest pride or assumption of superiority in its unaffected dignity. It was the mere outward fashioning by the fine genius within.

Caroline was, without doubt, the one of the greatest intellectual power and of the strongest character of the three; and for this Flavia loved her, and Henry loved her. They were both far above that jealousy of superior mental gifts which renders some incapable of estimating the value of such, in the near relations of our domestic life. Therefore, they both fully enjoyed her superiority. There was something each particularly rejoiced in: he, in a firmness against which, as against a rock, he might lean, and thus acquire double strength for the exertion of his own powers; and she, as a child enjoys itself in the protection of its mother, in whose presence it casts aside all fear of danger or thought of self-guardianship, and runs and frolics about, knowing it shall be restrained if necessary. Or she was like some tall, stately oak, overshading and sheltering her from the lurid sun, under whose shadow she could flutter and play about at ease, regardless of the noonday heat.

In short—for I really am getting as tedious as my age would account for, but not you excuse—never were three people so happily constituted to enjoy life together, and never were three friends so closely and warmly attached as were these three.

It did not seem, as you have found during poor Selwyn's life, that Caroline had attached herself very much to him. Certainly she had not been what is called in love. Probably the state of his health, the anticipation of his early death entertained by everybody, prevented this; but she had never during his lifetime admitted the addresses of, nor tolerated the most distant approaches to courtship from any other, and

after his death she would listen to nothing of the kind. Any allusion to the subject of her settling in life seemed unpleasant to her; and though she made no declarations, it soon came to be commonly understood that Caroline did not intend to marry.

This persuasion certainly added to the affection Henry and Flavia felt for her. They looked upon her as their own; as one from whom in this world they were never to be parted; and domestic affection is exceedingly increased by this impression.

One thing more, and I shall have finished my account of this very pretty party. The young people were not as yet so blest as to have children.

As is usually the case at first, they had wished it very much; but after a while they became reconciled to the idea of having none. Their love for each other was quite sufficient for them, and they were too busy to have time for regret, and too good to repine that this one gift was denied where so many were bestowed.

Thus, then, they were living, at a distance from London. Correspondence with home was anything but very regular, and they were still in happy ignorance of all that had lately occurred.

The good old lady whom I have slightly mentioned as their aunt—great-aunt, for she was the late Mrs. Wilmington's aunt—was at this time upon a visit to them.

She is one of my favourite old women, though she wasn't a very great favourite with everybody. She had retained too much of the severe notions of the old world morality to be a very acceptable person in these slack and easy days; but the three loved and valued her very much.

She loved them all dearly; and when these dry, severe sort of people do bestow upon others their hardly-earned esteem and affection, they certainly give a great deal of pleasure, and obtain much affection in return. And so it was in this case.

Mrs. Vernon was a great favourite, and always most welcome at Lostwithiel; for she had the greatest sympathy, and took the highest interest in all that was going on there. She would look rather annoyed and disapproving, to be sure, at times, when Henry was, as she thought, too indulgent and

lenient in his judgments upon the youthful peccadilloes of some unfortunate urchin or other, for Mrs. Vernon had a prejudice against boys; and she would look almost displeased when Flavia would persist in giving pink instead of dark-green ribbons to her school-girls. She said she was nourishing a taste for dress, a heinous fault in Mrs. Vernon's eyes; and even a taste for general extravagance, a still worse crime. Dark-green would wear so much better. She was, I believe, right in the main, not only as regarded the danger and almost criminality of indulging extravagant inclinations, but with respect to there being some little danger in Flavia's proceedings; but she was much more alarmed at the extent of the danger thus incurred than was necessary; and certainly her notions of what constituted culpable extravagance and love of dress reached to an extent which would have made a very ugly world if carried to that extreme by people in general.

Mrs. Vernon had a very handsome fortune of her own, which was to be divided between Henry and Caroline.

It is a very fine afternoon in October. They have dined early, and have been out walking; Mrs. Vernon still nearly as stout a walker as any one of them, though she is in her seventy-fifth year. They have been down to the village, and have been extremely busy, making arrangements for the feast of the women's club, which is to take place the next day. For the first object of all at Lostwithiel, as regarded the poor, was to cultivate habits of virtuous independence, to accustom them to look with something approaching to horror at the degradation of parish assistance; of being maintained at the expense of others; and one of their innumerable ways of making themselves useful had been, by the encouragement of benefit societies, founded upon just principles and accurate calculations; for want of which care, be it said in passing, numbers of these excellent institutions have become bankrupt, and the system, I fear, is falling into neglect.

Henry had instituted benefit societies both for men and women; and though he very much deprecated the encouragement in the poor of those false claims upon the charity of others which strike at the root of the poor man's morality, and is in fact Socialism in disguise, he was not hard or ungenerous. *Gifts* are not Socialism; the endowment of societies for the benefit of the poor is not Socialism; the eschewing approbation of the efforts made by each man to maintain his own family, by liberal but free loaning assistance to such societies, is not Socialism: it is Christian love, which voluntarily bestows and shares its advantages and its enjoyments with

others. To be an honorary member of the club, and assist in its prosperity, and enlarge its means for allowances, was not contrary to his principles; and this he did in a most liberal manner yearly. The club was also an occasion for those festive, friendly meetings among the poor, for which I, as one, am so great an advocate. But as in higher life we require a system of chaperonage to keep the younger spirits in due order, and prevent the gay and innocent meeting from degenerating into anything that strict morality might disapprove, so I think, with regard to the lower classes, who are not as yet, in my opinion, sufficiently educated to exercise this sort of superintendence among themselves, it is very desirable that, as much as possible, their meetings for purposes of simple enjoyment should be under the eye and with the co-partnership of the higher; and upon that account, therefore, the system of honorary membership is also very desirable, as it gives a certain right and propriety to the presence and interference of the richer neighbours, without infringing upon that independence and dignity of the poor man which every one ought to encourage and maintain.

So to-morrow the women's club feast is to be; and the inhabitants of the great house have all been down inspecting the preparations. There is a large room in the village dedicated to these festive meetings, and also serving as a convenient place for conducting the business of the parish. It was the one only good plan, I thought, in a Chartist village I once visited, that there was this kind of public room; so much better than always to have recourse to the alehouse for such matters.

The long table was already spread out: it reached the whole length of the room, and was covered with linen, the household manufacture of the village, spun by the women and woven by the village weaver. In this remote place the primitive custom yet prevailed of supplying their own wants as much as possible by their own industry; the system of exchanging had not reached here: homespun was the general wear, and there was no shop for cheap Manchester finery. The result was much domestic industry, and work for everybody; but I do not pretend to say whether the old plan we are leaving, or the new one which we are so rapidly adopting, be best. The earthenware upon the table was not, and could not be, of home manufacture; but because all could not be of home manufacture, was it well or ill done to make for themselves what they could make, and buy from strangers what they could not make?

There was a large, well-arranged kitchen at the back of

this great room, and here the women were busy roasting and baking, and preparing what had been provided for the grand day. Flavia and Caroline had been employed in dressing up the room with evergreens and paper flowers, and making it all very gay, and Mrs. Vernon had been sitting at the table, slipping coloured paper, and preparing materials for their work. And now they have done, and are hot and tired, and are come home to delicious tea.

The room they sit in is very pretty. The house was a long, rambling, picturesque-looking old house, built of a dark brick, relieved with stone-work and oaken carvings, with large casement windows, with peaks and gables all along the roof, and little lattices peeping among the ivy, and vines, and beautiful large-leaved magnolias, for the size and beauty of which last the place was celebrated. It stood upon a swelling lawn of no great extent, which descended, green and soft, and smooth as velvet, to the clear, brawling river, and was backed by the dark precipices, copsewood, and trees that rose in profusion behind. The only alteration which Harry and Flavia had made in this old place, of which they were excessively fond, had been the indispensable one, in their opinion, of bringing the large, rambling, drawing-room windows down to the ground; but they had effected this alteration with as little detriment to the antique appearance of the whole as possible.

The room was amply and comfortably furnished, but without any of that display of taste which betokens that the owners care much about these things. However, there were several fine old carved oaken chairs, and one or two rich old cabinets, and a great deal of valuable old family china, which had stood there for generations undisturbed, and which would have thrown the lovers of such things into extasy; but I don't think any one here very much cared for them: their life was too much occupied by business or enjoyment for them to be curious in matters of this kind.

The only modern ornaments which they had brought there were a collection of excellent pictures by living artists. Caroline loved art, and Henry loved to encourage actual, living, striving men of genius. Genius, in any form, he held to be a precious, an inestimable thing; and he had great sympathy with the difficulties, and the vexations, and the sufferings, and the pains of genius—at market; and therefore he felt that with his large income he had a right, and also that it was right, to increase his choice collection yearly, which he did by purchasing one or two pictures every spring.

He had a few painters peculiarly his favourites: but the two loveliest pictures in the room were by that delightful artist Collins, with whom we have lately become so well acquainted through the lovely portraiture of the man as depicted by his son. If all artists possessed his unaffected piety, his simplicity and singleness of character, his directness of aim, his devotion of his talents to the best purposes, and, above all, that healthful yet poetic genius which threw its ideal over the scenes of homefelt daily life, how precious, how moral, would it become! and the love of beauty, of which we hear so much, and the encouragement of an æsthetic taste among the lower orders, of which we hear more, become a real, genuine mode of moral improvement. Harry had no real taste for art, as art, perhaps: he was truthful and simple in this as in everything; he did not understand the value of difficulties vanquished; he could only judge of effects produced; and of these the simple representations of the moral life he loved pleased him: he delighted in Collins's pictures.

One of those he possessed was a beautiful sea-piece; the sunshine gleaming upon the sinking waves as they subside after a stormy day; the sands shining wet after the receding tide; and a fisherman's boat just come to shore, the family busily assisting to unlade it. Those who are acquainted with Collins's charming pictures will fancy the wife, the big boy in a red cap, the pretty simple children, the soft gleaming sky, and all the beauty of this enchanting picture, which was hung over the chimney-piece.

The other, which was reckoned still more beautiful, was a delightful picture of Welsh inland scenery: the woods, the precipices, the brawling streams, all beautifully cast into strong light and shadow by the beams of a sinking sun. Harvest was going on, and the last yellow load being carried to the homestead. It is needless to say how lovely was the distribution of colours, tints, and lights, or the disposition of the figures that animated this sweet landscape.

The other pictures were admirably well chosen, but had, every one, whoever the artist might be, something of the same character of rural truth, of peace and repose, which lends such a charm to those of Collins.

Everything the living picture this evening presented was in harmony with the rest. The window was still open to the lawn, and admitted the cool air of a very soft autumn night; but at a distance from it the lamp was lighted upon the tea-table, and a bright wood-fire was blazing upon the hearth. Flavia was making tea, Caroline cutting bread and butter;

Mrs. Vernon, with her hands in their quaint velvet mittens crossed before her, talking to the other two. They were cheerfully chatting about the approaching festival. Never was there such an interior of perfect peace and comfort.

With one exception.

There was one circumstance in Harry's life; one dark thread which ran through it all; one ingredient which, whenever it happened to present itself to notice, was sure to embitter all the rest. He was bound by the nearest ties of social life to folly, if not to sin. And, alas! the influences of folly and sin extend to all within their sphere.

In everything in which his father was or had been concerned, the evil influence was there, shedding a blight upon his joys, disturbing the inward peace he enjoyed, forming a subject of never-fading regret and anxiety. Separated as they now were, there had been an end to those innumerable small vexations which his father's vanity and extravagance had unceasingly occasioned in former days; but there was not, and could not be, an end to the serious anxiety he felt whenever his attention was called to that subject.

However, he banished these ideas as much as he could from his thoughts. Nothing he could do would be of the least use; and his father, he felt, must, for the present at least, be secured, through the enjoyment of the large income left him by Selwyn, from any distressing consequences of his inveterate wastefulness.

This evening it was only an accidental circumstance which had awakened a disagreeable chain of associations; merely the looking over some papers which had been hurriedly tied up together the evening before he set out upon that journey into Cornwall during his absence upon which Selwyn had died.

They had remained in a drawer of his writing-table unopened since then. Having a little leisure this evening, he had taken them out to examine them. He was sitting with a lighted candle in a remote corner of the room, thus employed, whilst the ladies were chatting away.

Seeing he was busy, Caroline got up to take him his tea; and standing behind him, as she set it down upon the table, cast a look upon the paper which lay before him. It was a sheet with a line or two at top written in her father's hand, and below it a variety of different characters; attempts at imitating a variety of hands, as it would seem. Henry turned round to look who it was that stood behind him; seeing it was Caroline, he gave her one sudden, painful, suspicious glance, and then rising with a disturbed countenance, crumpled

the paper up in both hands, and walking to the fire, threw it in, and watched it till it was entirely consumed.

Whilst Caroline thoughtfully returned to her seat with an expression of doubt, distrust, and disquietude upon her face, her brother went back to the writing-table; and, as if unable to pursue his occupation that night, pushed his papers into the drawer, and went and sat down upon a sofa at some distance, moody and thoughtful.

It was one of those pangs of dissatisfaction and distrust which his father's proceedings were so apt to occasion, but the feeling passed presently away; and, after half-an-hour or so, he drew a chair to the table, at which they were now all at work, and asked whether they would have any reading to-night. There was a joyful acquiescence, and he took the book they were engaged in and began to read; and now and then he turned and stirred the fire, or trimmed the lamp. The brief uneasiness was over: he felt so *very* happy.

CHAPTER X.

I BELIEVE it was about eleven o'clock, and they were just lighting their candles and preparing to go to bed, when they were startled by the sound of a carriage rapidly approaching, and a loud ring at the hall bell.

The door was heard to open, and the rattling steps of a post-chaise were let down; two persons were heard coming into the house, and the door was shut behind them. The footman entered, and said two men wanted to speak to his master for a moment.

"Show them in here," said Henry, somewhat startled, as one always is by the appearance of strangers at an unusual hour of the night; "what business can have brought them so late?"

"Will you please to walk in," said the footman to the men.

"Are the ladies there?" was asked in a hoarse, rather rough voice.

"Yes, to be sure; it's the drawing-room."

"Better ask your master to come out and speak to us here, or in some other room."

"What great secret can it be," said Flavia, laughing, "that we are not to be allowed to hear? Go to them, Henry, for goodness' sake! some horrid justice's business or other: I hope nothing very bad."

Caroline looked uneasy as she said, "What can it be? I hope nothing bad can have happened in the neighbourhood. It is so odd for them to come at this time of night."

"And that man's a constable, by his coat," said Flavia, laughing again.

Henry had in the mean time entered the hall.

The man who had just spoken only waited till he had advanced a few steps, and then crossing the hall hastily towards him, laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said—

"I arrest you upon a charge of forging a will."

The unfeigned astonishment depicted upon Henry's countenance seemed to overpower every other feeling.

"I!—forgery of a will! Gentlemen, there must be a mistake here, at least," and he laughed with something of a contemptuous scorn, not common upon any occasion with him. But any man would feel irritated at being the subject of such a disagreeable mistake. "I, gentlemen! Who, in the name of heaven! can have accused me of forging a will? Let me look at the warrant, if you please," he said, rather haughtily.

"Oh! there's no mistake, I believe," said the police officer. "You are Mr. Henry Wilmington, of Lostwithiel, the master of this house, I believe. It's all regular enough; the name is not so very common a one: I'm not much used to make such disagreeable blunders as this would amount to."

And he began to feel in his pocket for the warrant.

"And at whose suit," said Henry, whose colour began to change a little; "at whose suit am I attached for such a black and ignominious crime: forgery of a will? What will, I pray?"

"Forgery of the codicil to a will, if you like that better, and at the suit of Mr. Miles Craiglethorpe," was the answer.

"Craiglethorpe! Craiglethorpe!"

"Ay, sir, Miles Craiglethorpe; Mr. Miles Craiglethorpe, late of Calcutta."

"Craiglethorpe! There is some mistake, I am sure. The only Mr. Craiglethorpe I ever knew anything of perished four years ago in the 'Sumatra.'"

"Yes, so some people thought, I believe," said the man, with a meaning look, "or they would not have had the impudence—I beg pardon, the courage I mean—to venture upon some things. No, Mr. Craiglethorpe was not lost in the 'Sumatra,' as people supposed: he's come back; he's appeared again. Everybody don't make him very welcome, it's said, but there's no help for it."

Henry put his hand to his forehead, and rubbed his brow as if to recover his recollection. His thoughts were bewildered and all in confusion. He was a man of such delicate nerves that they were always painfully shaken and affected by any sudden blow: it was his infirmity, unhappy young man!

His evident confusion was not unmarked by the policeman; he drew his own conclusions from it.

"Mr. Craiglethorpe alive!" were the first words Henry uttered. "Show me the warrant."

The man gave it to him; he opened and read it. There was no doubt at all of the matter. The warrant was made

out at the suit of Mr. Miles Craiglethorpe against Henry Wilmington, Esq. of Lostwithiel, Montgomeryshire; and for forgery of a codicil to a will purporting to be that of the late Albert Selwyn, Esq. of Portugal Street, London. "Can it be possible? Mr. Craiglethorpe alive, and returned to England, and I never to have heard of it!"

And then rushed to his memory all that had passed; all that had been done of wrong, unhandsome, and unfair—painful subjects, which, under the conviction of that gentleman's death, he had ventured to discard long ago from his thoughts, but which now came rushing in like a tide: his vain remonstrances with his father as to the investment of that large sum of money so confidingly entrusted to his friendship; his father's wilful obstinacy, and the vain extravagance of his subsequent life; extravagance increased by the culpable employment of this very money. *There* was the wrong; there was the irretrievable ignominy: as for the accusation about the will, he scarcely thought at this moment of that. Of course, Selwyn's property must be restored to Mr. Craiglethorpe; of course, it must go where he knew Selwyn always intended it should go, and where he would have taken care it did go, but for his belief that his uncle was dead. The charge of forgery in this whirlwind of rapid and confused thought scarcely excited his attention. It was so utterly false, so preposterously absurd; to disprove it, he had but to speak and deny. Every man in the world would believe him upon his bare assurance as to that; little known as he might have been, every one who did know him understood him well enough to be certain he was utterly incapable of such a crime as *that*.

After a few minutes, recovering from the extreme hurry of thought and pity which this sudden announcement of Mr. Craiglethorpe's return had occasioned, and resuming his usual fortitude and calmness, he turned to the two officers of the law, and said—

"This is a very serious, but I must say a most preposterous charge, gentlemen; and I think I may venture to say that Mr. Craiglethorpe must have been a long time absent from England, and but a very short while returned, before he would have entertained such an idea for a moment. My character alone, I flatter myself, would be a sufficient refutation of any charge of this sort. No doubt he is sore about that unfortunate codicil. No one can blame him for that; but it would have been a matter easily settled, without having recourse to a measure which I am at a loss to look upon in any light but as one purely vindictive. Mr. Craiglethorpe

might have learned, if he had chosen to inquire, that neither my father nor I was a man to profit by a testamentary paper, drawn up hastily under mistaken impressions."

"Then I am to understand," said the minister of the law, "that if Mr. Craiglethorpe would withdraw this indictment, you'd be willing to agree to give up the whole property obtained under this codicil, said to be forged, without further trouble?"

"That is an obnoxious way of putting the thing, sir," said Henry. "Not because this ill-considered and offensive charge has been made, but because, in my opinion, justice in this case demands the restitution, would such restitution be made."

"Justice demands!" said the other, with an equivocal sort of emphasis. "It strikes me that it's a pity Justice, as you call it, had not her demands satisfied immediately upon Mr. Craiglethorpe's return to England, and before this charge was made by him. There has been time enough for restitution, I take it; between five and six months: I'm afraid it's rather too late now."

"Never too late, sir, to do what is right."

"Never too late, did you say, Mr. Wilmington? I'm afraid you may find that a mistake. But suppose you were to write to Mr. Craiglethorpe, and tell him what you are ready to do. It's too late, I fear, to withdraw the indictment," he muttered to his companion, "but they might subtract the principal witnesses."

Henry did not hear him. He was thinking.

The more he reflected upon the subject, the more the manifest injustice, after all his losses through their family, of retaining, for a moment longer than necessary, the inheritance which belonged, in right of every honourable man's intentions, to Mr. Craiglethorpe, was insupportable to him. Then he was deeply offended at the vindictive spirit which had prompted this preposterous attempt to fix a charge of forgery upon him, and that without even giving him an opportunity of doing what he thought fair and just to himself; but he was not accustomed to suffer the injurious conduct of others to influence his determination as to what was right and equitable with regard to them.

"I shall write to Mr. Craiglethorpe immediately," said he to the police officer, "and set his mind at ease as far as regards my part of this inheritance. With my father there may be more difficulty, because there will be considerable sums, I fear, to refund. But I am rich, at least my wife and a friend of mine are; and they will both, I am sure, be

ready and willing to lend their assistance, so that this matter may be equitably arranged."

"Very good. Please to write all this to Mr. Craiglethorpe, and I will dispatch it by my messenger," said the wily thief-taker.

It was part of his business to obtain evidence, so as to detect villany and ensure the punishment of the guilty, and he had learned at last to take an absolute pleasure in this; not that he was a bad or particularly hard-hearted man, but he took pleasure, like many another man, in the mere excitement of hunting down game, and his game was criminal offenders. He was likewise prompted to this by a rough sentiment of justice, founded on a bad opinion of mankind. In his opinion the chances were, that every one against whom a warrant was obtained was guilty: that is to say, ninety-nine out of a hundred such. He knew how many criminals escaped under the benevolent principle of the English criminal law of evidence, and he had formed a general conclusion that the ends of justice required more numerous convictions. He had seen so much triumphant exultation of wickedness in men who had escaped, had known such evil effects produced by the uncertainty of conviction, that he, of a harsh, though not cruel nature, had arrived at the conclusion that it was much more desirable that the guilty should be convicted than the innocent shielded; for he argued that, as I said before, out of every hundred attached maybe ninety-nine were guilty, of whom, perhaps, one-third got off; and then, said he, what was the loss of one innocent man among so many guilty, in comparison with the evil of such numerous escapes? He was not worthy, with such a sentiment as this, to be a minister of the benign maxims of our law.

In this instance he never thought of doubting that Henry Wilmington was guilty of the crime charged against him; but he thought it would be rather difficult to carry the proof home. He was quite incapable of entering into the delicate conscientiousness of his feelings; and he considered this instantaneous proposal to abandon all claim upon the property, and refund, out of his private fortune, what his father might have expended, as the strongest evidence of a guilty conscience, driven to restitution by fear of consequences, that could exist. Certainly it might have appeared suspicious to any man who did not know the relations between the families of the father and the son, that no offer of restitution of any kind had been made until this warrant was issued, and this though Mr. Craiglethorpe had been nearly six months in England.

And so the thief-taker, drawing this conclusion, was desirous, of course, to put such a piece of evidence into the hands of the pursuer. He made no further remark as to the possibility of withdrawing the indictment, but advised Henry to write immediately and make his offer.

"I agree with you," said Henry, "as to that; and if you will sit down here for a few minutes, and take a glass of wine," laying his hand upon the bell, "I will go into my own room and write the letter, which may be immediately dispatched as you propose; and then I hope Mr. Craiglethorpe will be satisfied."

"If you please, sir," said Mr. Norton, "that won't exactly do. A glass of wine will be rather acceptable; but I think, if you see good, it may be as well to send for pen, ink, and paper here."

"No, I would rather go into my own room. The letter will require a little care in its composition, and I shall do it best alone."

"I dare say!"

"Well, sir?"

"Why, now, you can't suppose, Mr. Wilmington, that I am such a ninny as that; that the first thing I do when I have caught my man is to let him walk quietly away in a big house like this, full of all sorts of queer places, I'll be bound, and utterly unknown to me. You can't suppose me such a moon-calf as that, Mr. Henry Wilmington!"

Henry's countenance changed. For the first time, in the hurry of his thoughts, the actual position in which he stood was realised. He was actually arrested under a criminal charge, a charge of the blackest dye. He was in the grasp of the law; he was a prisoner.

For a few moments he found it impossible to speak.

"Very disagreeable, I'm afraid. Very sorry, Mr. Wilmington; but you see necessity has no law; or, rather, law is necessity. But we need make no fuss about it, if you'll only be ruled by me. We neither need startle the servants nor frighten the ladies, yet a while, at least. If you'll only take my advice, send for your pen and ink, and write your letter here; I'll dispatch it, and we'll see what will come of it."

"The ladies! My wife! my sister!" rushed into poor Henry's thoughts; and the colour flushed and then faded again upon his altered cheek.

"Yes, yes; you are right. I see." And he rang the bell.

His hand shook very much as he did so. He could not

help shuddering; his agitation for a moment was too overpowering. But he struggled hard against his weakness, and before the footman entered the room, had been able to overcome the outward demonstration of it.

This agitated face, this changing colour, this trembling, shuddering frame, even the desperate effort to recover his self-command, all were noticed by the thief-taker as the infallible indications of guilt. Probably it would have been the same had the case been reversed. By what means shall the innocent, in the hurry and distress of such a dreadful accusation, dispel suspicion, and persuade mankind that he is guiltless?

Hardened guilt can more easily play the part of injured innocence than innocence itself, thus bewildered by a totally unexpected change. A clamorous declaration of innocence, or pretended rage at being the object of suspicion; the blush of shame covering the cheek at the very idea of being coupled with crime, or wild terror at such a new, such a terrible position; tears or rage, calm dejection, or the boldness of conscious rectitude; all and every one may be simulated by guilt; all and every one mistaken as the indications of guilt by an evil and suspicious eye.

But the servant opened the door, and Harry was by this time thinking alone of those he loved.

"William," he said, assuming as composed and indifferent an air as he found possible, "tell your mistress and the ladies that the business these gentlemen have come upon will detain me some hours. I beg of them all to go to bed. Bring some wine and cold meat here, and my writing things out of my room."

The servant closed the door, and the two men now, without being bid, drew themselves chairs, and sat down by the fire; whilst Henry paced the room, endeavouring to compose his thoughts and review his situation.

Mr. Craiglethorpe then had returned.

He had a very perfect recollection of this gentleman, as far as the impression made upon a boy of eleven or twelve years old can be called a perfect one. He remembered his small thin figure, his yellow shrivelled face, his black sharp eyes, and the sarcastic expression of his smile. But then he recollected, too, all sorts of good-natured things done to him as a child, and the great and important proofs of friendship and confidence given to his father.

Then he shuddered at the recollection of the wrong he had sustained, in the manner that large sum, so generously

confided, had been made use of; and then he lamented that want of thought in poor Selwyn, which he had always attributed to his weakness during his last moments, in having thus disposed of his property upon the evidence he had received, without the precaution of inserting a proviso in case of his uncle's return. And then he trembled to think that there might be a difficulty in persuading his father to surrender a large income which his former extravagance had rendered necessary to him, even though coerced by this terrible proceeding; a proceeding which he still could not persuade himself to look upon in any other light than as a vindictive measure upon the part of an angry and harsh-tempered man. Suddenly the thought flashed across him, that his father and Mr. Craiglethorpe might already have met, and that his father had refused to do justice and make restitution, and that this proceeding was an attempt to force his father to give way. But why attack *him*, Henry?

The perplexing question recurred—Why *him?* What could induce any man to make an accusation, at once so cruel and absurd, against him? What magistrate could be induced to entertain it, so far as even to issue a warrant upon it?

But then the dreadful thought arose—issued it *was.* Though innocent as the unborn infant, such a charge had been made; such a charge by some believed. His fair name had received a stain, his honour a blight, which nothing, not even the immediate withdrawal of the charge, could entirely obliterate.

That the charge would be immediately withdrawn, he did not for a moment doubt; but with his constitutional tendency to discouragement and depression, that it had ever been entertained seemed to him a stigma that a life could not obliterate.

The footman now returned, bringing in the writing materials, and immediately afterwards a tray with cold roast beef, bread, ale, and wine. The eyes of the two legal officers twinkled at this good cheer; and drawing their chairs close to the table, without waiting to be invited, they sat down as if they were at home, and began to eat and drink with great appetite.

As soon as the door shut after the man, Henry, whilst these two regaled, clattered with their knives and forks, filled their glasses, and munched, and munched, and munched, carrying on a conversation in a subdued tone, interrupted with sundry little, short, hoarse, low laughs, Henry sat down to write his letter to Mr. Craiglethorpe.

HENRY WILMINGTON TO MR. CRAIGLETHORPE.

"I cannot but own to feeling hurt and surprised, that one, once my father's friend, and who has known me from a boy, after having been four years looked upon as dead, should upon his return, instead of making that return known to his friends, and giving them an opportunity of doing what they considered just in the way of restitution; that he should, I say, first make them aware of his existence by instituting one of the most cruel and unprovoked proceedings possible. If Mr. Craiglethorpe had possessed the justice and the candour to rely upon the honourable feelings of other men, he might have learned that the property of which he is endeavouring to gain possession, by means so barbarous as a criminal process, would have been his upon the first intimation that he had returned: there cannot be a doubt upon my mind that, however the law might decide it between us, the property is equitably all his own. I am certain Selwyn would so have left it, had he not felt assured of his death. My claim upon it, I hereby promise, as solemnly as man can do, to abandon immediately; my father, I am sure, will be ready to do justice upon his side; and if there should prove any difficulty in arranging the question of arrears, I have money and friends, and Mr. Craiglethorpe may rely upon it, *he* shall be no loser. All I would ask in return for this is, that this most false and slanderous charge against me may be instantly withdrawn. I blush to think that, however preposterous, I can have been subjected to it for an hour.

"HENRY WILMINGTON."

He folded and sealed the letter.

Mr. Norton looked as if he would very much like to have been made acquainted with its contents; but no proposal of the kind being made, he handed it to his companion, and told him to dispatch it to town by a messenger; and "Take notice of the circumstances under which this letter was written," said he.

When the man had left the room, the officer told Henry bluntly that he intended to set forward without loss of time, and that he expected he should be ready to accompany him to town by four o'clock to-morrow morning. "For of course you must be aware," he said, "that Mr. Craiglethorpe is bound over to prosecute; but your letter"—with a curious look—"will be admitted as *evidence*."

The truth flashed upon Henry's mind.

"Fool!" cried he, and was rushing to the door; "I will have the letter back; I insist upon having it back. Ah! I see the use that may be made of it. What do you mean?" struggling with the thief-taker, who endeavoured to detain him. "I *will* have that letter back, bloodhound! how dare you?"

But it was in vain. The man had sinews of iron, and hands like those of a Hercules. The small, delicate form of his victim was perfectly powerless in his grasp. He felt this, and ended the ignoble struggle. He sighed, sat down, and his face became black as night.

This idea was intolerable. Hitherto there had not been a shade of self-reproach mingled in this gloomy business, and, now he felt the rashness of the step he had taken, he cursed his own unguarded generosity, his heedless promptitude to act upon such a momentous occasion; and the rectitude of principle, and even the conviction of the disinterested and honourable nature of the sentiments which had prompted him, were powerless to console. There are occasions when we are allowed, nay, commanded, to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the gentleness of the dove; and he who has been hasty, rash, inconsiderate in moments of importance like this, even when urged by the most noble and generous motives, will not escape regret.

Manly steadiness and prudence are high qualities; the firmness to stand upon self-defence in an evil hour, and when surrounded with dangers and difficulties to be upon our guard, is a virtue. He who forsakes himself in circumstances such as these will find cause for regret, almost for remorse.

Poor Harry! this generous promptitude to self-sacrifice, this utter disregard of his own interest, in comparison with what was right, just, and kind to others, had been one of his most adorable qualities. Pity that at this crisis of his destiny, for want of a little cool consideration of the consequences, he had done what was unquestionably right, in a manner so hasty and unwise as to render it to himself a source of the greatest of evils. The next moments were very, very bitter.

The unhappy young man sank into a chair in a remote corner of the room, and abandoned himself at last to a train of the most cruel reflections. He saw the effect his unguarded offer might tend to produce, and he now felt assured that there was no chance of its being accepted. The image of Mr. Craiglethorpe assumed a terrific aspect; he saw him hard, cold, determined, revengeful, pursuing his purpose with unflinching perseverance, and neither to be convinced nor persuaded that the suspicions he had taken up could be

utterly unfounded. And yet upon what possible ground could these suspicions rest? Far from being in the house, Henry had not even been in London when the codicil was drawn up. Far from endeavouring even to influence his dispositions, he had not been there when Selwyn died. He had not even gone so far as to announce the death of his uncle to him; he had thought him too ill that morning to bear the shock. He had never, in any one single instance, or to any single person, given the slightest cause to suspect him of coveting that inheritance; he had always considered it, and spoken of it, as of course and as of right Mr. Craiglethorpe's. He had known it to be so bequeathed; and it was with astonishment equal to that which his father almost clamorously expressed, that he had found so sudden a change in the last dispositions that had been made.

And now he must go away from his home, carried away as a felon; be lodged in a common jail; be torn from his wife, his sister, his old friends. And for what? And what would become of them, in this unexampled scene of horror and distress? Could such things be possible? Could they really happen? Could it be true? he a felon! Could such things be, now-a-days, in these times, that an innocent, unsuspecting man could be arrested, disgraced, cast into a common jail? a man like him! And for a charge so utterly unfounded! His thoughts began to grow quite bewildered; he felt dizzy; he must be in a dream: he took his hands from before his face; he shook himself; he strove to awaken.

But there sat that hard-faced officer of justice, with his keen, observing countenance, his arms folded, having finished his meal; his eye fixed intently upon his victim, watching him.

Harry met his gaze, for the first time, with a look of stern, haughty defiance. He knew at last in what sort of hands he was. He felt that he had been entrapped and betrayed. He turned away, and began to pace the room.

He was again lost in deep thought; but he was rallying his spirits, and soon became more composed. He was endeavouring to look the evil in the face; and, yielding no more to hasty impulses, to consider with as much composure as he possibly could what would be best to do.

That he should be able to prove his innocence, when he was so perfectly and entirely innocent in thought, word, and deed, he could not doubt. What were criminal courts instituted for? What would judges and juries be but a farce, if a man could be convicted of a crime with which he had not the slightest shadow of a connection? Evidence! What

evidence could possibly be produced? And yet some appearance of evidence there must have been too. He was aware that, unless a certain amount of evidence had been produced, no magistrate would have been found to issue the warrant.

He began to endeavour to recollect all that had occurred upon the day when he last saw Selwyn.

The circumstances one by one were recollected as he mused, and gradually took form and connection. The absence of Charles; his letting his father in; his leaving him in the parlour; the half-opened drawer filled with papers; the bolt drawn back as his father came out of the room; the hasty leave-taking, and he letting himself out, leaving his father there; his leaving Selwyn in ignorance; the letter he had written; and then, a sudden recollection, the paper he had but that very night destroyed, rose, as if in characters of fire, before him.

Then a cold tremor began slowly to creep through his veins; a horror, as of great darkness, fell upon him. The hair upon his head seemed to rise, as a chillness like that of death passed over his skin. He clenched his hands for an instant, raised them above his head in one unguarded moment of agonised despair, and muttering, "Oh, God! oh, all-merciful God!" sank down in a chair by the table; and sinking his head upon his folded arms, remained there as if deprived of sense and motion.

Confused images of anguish now, like pale shadows, passed before his mental eye. He saw his young and lovely wife; his darling, his delight, his pretty, gay, precious treasure; he saw her with hair dishevelled, her face blurred and blistered with tears, wringing her hands in the agonies of despair, and calling franticly upon his name. He saw that pale sister, her eyes tearless, her countenance as if turned to stone, the image of horror, standing there, endeavouring to keep down the shrieks of agony which seemed struggling for vent within her bosom. He saw the cold, stony look of consternation in the face of the good but severe old aunt. He saw himself, pale and silent, pinioned, and walking with difficulty along. The face of a priest was looking into his; and the dark, gloomy countenances of the hangman and his assistants were there. He saw the scaffold and the multitudinous crowd, and he listened to the stifled execrations of men.

He was aroused from this dreadful vision, for a vision it seemed almost to be, he had been so long quiet and immoveable, that it would appear as if he had been unconsciously dozing, by the thief-taker touching him on the elbow and saying—

"Come, sir! four o'clock: time to be thinking of starting."

He sprang up and opened his eyes wide. They were wild and distended.

"You've had a nap, methinks; will do you good, sir. Come, come!" for the expression of his countenance, no longer as he thought of hypocritical security, but of real anguish and despair, aroused some feeling of pity; "come, come! don't be so cast down. Many a worserer than you has got off before this time. The law has its chinks and its loop-holes. Whilst there's life there's hope. Here, sir! better take a glass of wine. And now I reckon it's time to be upon the march."

"No, no!" said Henry, putting away the wine with his hand; "time to be going, did you say? Where to, pray?"

"Come, come, sir; rouse yourself! You look scarcely half-awake. It's a bad plan, believe me, to fall into them dozes. The thing, you see, rushes upon a man like new, when he comes to himself, betterer and stronger. I always advise a gentleman to keep awake, and look the thing well in the face, and think it well over, and make up his mind to it, before he allows himself to go to sleep. It comes so like a bewilderment, you see. But come, come! you're shaking it off. With your leave I'll ring the bell, and order the chaise to the door. Of course, sir, you'll prefer a chaise to a public conveyance, though it be at your own expense; the charge can be nothing to you."

"Chaise! Where to?"

"Why, to London; to Newgate, to be sure: where else should you think I was going to take you, Mr. Wilmington?"

There was silence for a few minutes.

Then Henry said, in his own gentle, quiet, natural voice, "I am sure you will allow me to take leave of my wife, my sister, and my good aunt, and give me an opportunity of breaking this affair to them myself."

"Why, sir, the ladies, I take it, are in bed; and, you see, I mustn't lose sight of you."

The colour again flashed over the pale cheek, and strange fire flashed from that usually mild eye; he set his teeth, he clenched his hands till the nails seemed almost to pierce the

flesh; then, with a desperate effort again mastering himself, he said—

"You can stand at the door, if you please, and I will pledge you my word, as a gentleman and a man of honour, that I will not make the slightest attempt to escape."

"Will you pledge your word of honour that there's no second door to the rooms, and that the windows are sixteen feet from the ground? I should like that best. But I crave your pardon, sir; I'm a rough hand, and it's my duty." There was that in the look which met the insulting beginning of his speech that melted even this man. "Sir, you shall do as you please. I will go up-stairs and stand at the door."

"Are you awake, my dearest?"

"No, I have not been able to sleep. I have been wondering why you did not come to bed, and was listening to the opening and shutting of doors. What is it, Harry dear? Nothing very, very bad, I hope."

"My love! nay, lie down. Lay your head upon your pillow, Flavia." She obeyed without a word, terrified; her large eyes fixed upon his face. "My dear ——"

He gasped a little; he wanted breath; he struggled with the obstruction in his throat. He spoke again in a very low voice.

"My darling! sweet and lovely, and delicate and beautiful, and everything most enchanting as you are, you are more even than all that to me. Flavia, my life! you have a brave heart within, and you know, love, and trust your God. Look to him now, precious treasure of my heart! for the affliction that is come upon us is heavy indeed. But there is another and a better world, my love."

"Merciful heaven!" starting up with dismay in every feature. "Harry, Harry! what dreadful thing has happened?"

"Lie down again, my dearest; lay your head down, Flavia! I must go away from you for a little while."

"But, Harry, that is very grievous; but that's not all. I see by your face it's not all," and she began to shudder and tremble.

"No, my sweetest! it's not all."

"Where are you going to? What are you going for? and for how long? Speak! speak!"

She was starting up again, but he tried to keep her still. "Hush!" he said, in a low voice, "your husband is arrested." She uttered a low cry.

"For what? Goodness! goodness! speak! what?"

"A criminal charge: for the forgery of a will."

She burst into a loud hysterical laugh.

"Ridiculous! laughable! Who could invent such an absurd tale? It's a trick; it's a farce; it's a mystification!" and she continued to laugh.

"Don't laugh, my Flavia! pray don't, if you can help it!" he said, with a look of intense pain. "I would rather see you weep a few wholesome tears. Dear creature, weep for me, for I am about to be carried to prison, my love!"

The words produced the effect he intended. She ceased this frightful laughing, and looked him steadily in the face as he went on.

"And if you would help me and comfort me, and console me, my saint and angel, in this dreadful hour, you will be calm, and courageous, and confiding, and have faith in me and heaven."

"But who can have made such a charge? and who have entertained it? and upon what possible grounds?"

"Still I do not know. There are some terrible surmises in my mind, I own to you, as to the chain of constructive evidence which may possibly be brought against me. It will not be quite so easy to prove my innocence as I at first thought, but you will not therefore suspect me of being guilty," said he, with a tender melancholy smile.

Upon which she sprang up from her bed, threw her arms round his neck, and burst into a flood of tears. He let her weep upon his bosom for some time, gently embracing her, and bending down and kissing her hair, which fell down over her shoulders, for her little nightcap had fallen off, and two or three tears rolled down his own cheeks, and refreshed his poor heart, like rain-drops in the arid desert.

She wept long, and by this she was relieved from the first paroxysm of distress, and she became more herself; and her first instinct upon recovering recollection, her first wish, her first endeavour, was to subdue her passion of grief, and be a support and comfort to her husband.

So she disentangled herself gently from his arms, threw on her dressing-gown, pushed her feet into her slippers, and said as quietly as she could, but with a tenderness inexpressible in her trembling voice—

"Tell me what I am to do to help you. Does Caroline know?"

"Not yet; I came to you first."

"Will you go to her? No, don't; she shall come here; don't go away till you meet. I will just step across the passage, and beg her to come to us: stay here, Harry."

"There is some one at the door. Put on your shawl and just twist up your hair," said he, touching it with a sigh, "and let us go to her together."

She did not seem to understand him, but mechanically obeyed.

And then he took her arm in his, and they both went to Caroline's room.

She had not gone to bed.

About five o'clock that morning, a post-chaise with three men in it, drawn by four horses, left the door of Lostwithiel; and about seven Flavia's carriage, with four horses likewise, followed.

The two young women with admirable fortitude, had gone through all the necessary preparations for their departure; had selected and packed up what would be necessary for Henry's comfort; had settled matters with the steward, arranged for supplies of money at the banker's, and for the care of those dependent upon their bounty.

The servants, with looks of horror and sympathy, went about mechanically doing as they were bidden, but seeming quite incapable of any exertion; but the two young women, though ghastly pale, and their hands trembling and limbs shaking, set about what was to be done and completed it; and then, with a feeling almost like relief, the first slight alleviation of their horrible sufferings, they threw themselves into the chariot, sank each into a corner, stretched out and clasped each other's hands, and started forward in silence.

Mrs. Vernon was persuaded to stay behind, and follow them at the leisure necessary to her age.

CHAPTER XI.

We left Mr. Craiglethorpe abandoning himself to his feelings, and yielding to his fate with a mixture of fortitude and deep vengeful resentment, which at once excites our admiration and regret. The fortitude with which this man, to whom the pursuit and the enjoyment of wealth had been the main-spring of existence, submitted thus to lose all, and sink into poverty and obscurity without a murmur; the apparent simplicity with which he had at once yielded to that alteration in his social position which is, among the generality, the inevitable consequence of a great decline in wealth; the determination with which he had resisted all those good-natured attempts on the part of others to make him forget the change, and to persuade him that they still looked upon him as what he had been, not as he then was, would have touched upon the heroic, had the principle from which all this proceeded been pure.

Had it arisen from a sense of the high duty of submission and acquiescence to a wise and almighty hand, even had it proceeded from a genuine and dignified contempt for the mere externals of life, it would have been admirable; but, alas! the root of all these things was a bitter sense of wrong, an unmitigated and an obstinate determination never to forgive and never to forget. These things gave him a sort of gloomy pleasure in nursing his resentful feelings, in casting the cup of his adversity to the dogs, and in resisting rather than welcoming any alteration of his lot which might mitigate the consequences of the injuries he had suffered.

All had sunk deep into his heart, yet he could not be properly said to be awaiting the moment of revenge; for it aggravated the bitterness of his mind to feel that he was utterly powerless to revenge or to punish. What were the rage or resentment of a poor, poverty-stricken, and helpless old man to the prosperous Mr. Wilmington? He had shown how little he cared for his affection, how utterly forgotten were all the ties of their ancient friendship. What use in

reproaches or remonstrance? Who cared for them? They were impotent and ridiculous.

It was the very sense of the impotency of his anger which rendered it the more intense.

The life he had adopted I have before described: he made no change in it. The day was spent at his desk in the counting-house, the evening sitting alone in his humble lodging.

His thoughts were, as I have told you, scarcely ever diverted from the wrongs over which he incessantly brooded: he had never been a reader in his youth; he cared not for matters of general interest; he had no enjoyment in the pursuits of science, and no genuine pleasure in those of art. To make money had been the employment, to spend it the gratification of his life; that employment and that gratification taken away, there remained only, in the place of ardent speculation and brilliant success, the humdrum, dirty routine of a clerk's life, undertaken to procure bread, in place of the excitement of jovial society, good cheer, magnificent display, and the consideration such things carry with them: nothing. There was not one single object, unconnected with such a life, that could prove a source of genuine interest: so miserably poor was the inner chamber of the mind, so wretchedly destitute of objects.

Books, politics, literature, music, painting, and still less those great questions of social improvement which occupy many so ardently, and which, in the interest they awaken, carry with them their own reward, were alike without interest for him.

Nothing of all this could withdraw him from his gloomy thoughts. And far less would such a man employ those hours of solitude in the attempt to deal with himself; to sub-subjugate to the better man within the passions and the distorted views of the worse without; to purify and strengthen his heart, to master his resentments, to raise and dignify his wrongs.

There are but few men, I fear, who ever think of seriously attempting such things. Such ideas do not even cross the mind of the majority. Absorbed in the world's business or pleasure, far from heeding, they do not even seem to know that such things are to be done, and that it ought to be the main business of life to do them.

In the mean time, Mr. Wilmington, after having made one ineffectual attempt at assisting Mr. Craiglethorpe with what money he thought he could afford, or indeed, as he managed matters, had to bestow, suffered him to sink into the obscurity he seemed to desire, and let the disagreeable subject pass from his mind as much as he could.

He had, however, his little qualms of conscience now and then, just sufficient to make a man like him avoid casting his thoughts that way; he and his wife carefully abstained from alluding to it in their most confidential moments; and so they went on in their usual showy and unsatisfactory way of living, and dreamed not of account or retribution.

They had kept the fact of Mr. Craiglethorpe's return most carefully from Harry, who had now been absent from his father's house for some time. There was little satisfaction in visiting it, and he was extremely busy at Lostwithiel. At the time of Mr. Craiglethorpe's return, he had not been at Wimbledon for several months, and his father never asked any of them to visit him during the six months following.

Correspondence was short; letters were exchanged if any business matters required it between Harry and his father, and a kind of exchange of short epistles was kept up between Lizzy and Caroline; but as neither took much interest in the doings of the other, it was proportionably languid. It was easy, therefore, to avoid any allusion to Mr. Craiglethorpe's return, and to everything which had occurred in consequence.

So matters stood, and so matters seemed as if they would go on, when one evening Mr. Craiglethorpe was returning home, after office hours were over, and was proceeding through one of the narrow streets of the city. He was walking along musing as usual, his head bent down upon his breast, his eyes fixed upon the stones, when he ran against a man who was going the opposite way.

"I beg your pardon," both said at once; and both, lifting up their eyes simultaneously, simultaneously fell back, with an exclamation of astonishment.

"My stars!" cried the one. "Can it? no, it can't! yes, it is—never believe my eyes—else Mr.—nay, it cannot be! My stars! alive! Mr. Craiglethorpe!"

"Charles!" said the other.

"The same, sir; and most heartily, heartily glad to see you in Old England again, sir. Why, we heard you were lost, sir, and all of us believed it. The newspapers, you know, sir, every one of them said so."

"Newspapers *never* lie," said Mr. Craiglethorpe, quietly.

"Why, no, to be sure, sir; so one would think: they seem to know everything that goes on; and every one of them said that the 'Sumatra' was lost, and every soul on board had perished; and we all knew you'd taken your passage in that ship, sir."

"Well, Charles, though it *was* in all the newspapers, for once, you see, all the papers were out; for here I am, and no mistake."

"No mistake, indeed, Mr. Craiglethorpe, and looking as like yourself as possible: not aged in the least, sir, except—— except ——"

For Mr. Craiglethorpe was wont to be particularly neat and handsomely, though plainly dressed, and now his clothes were mean and shabby.

"Oh, my coat you mean! never mind that; I'm the same man. But it does not answer, I find, to die, and then come back again in this world, Charles. One finds some dear friend has stepped into one's place; and then one's more free than welcome, you see. But, come, I must have a little talk with you. I've got half-a-crown in my pocket: what say you to a glass of brandy and water, Charles? You used to like it well enough in times gone by, or you were belied."

"No, never, upon my honour, Mr. Craiglethorpe; never spirits, upon my word."

"Well, then, a pint of port shall it be? Come in here." And so saying, he turned into a neighbouring tavern and asked for a private room.

"Sit down; make yourself at home; help yourself," said Mr. Craiglethorpe to the old serving-man. But not choosing to sit down with him at the same board, and casting himself into an old arm-chair by the fireplace, Charles poured out a glass with some solemnity, and drank to Mr. Craiglethorpe's health and his happy return.

To which the other answered by a sort of nod, and then began—

"So you lost your poor young master, Charles, after all?" said he.

"Ay, Mr. Craiglethorpe; poor young gentleman! Never had a day's health since I lived with him; but he went off more suddenly than any of us expected at last, as no doubt you've heard, and all particulars."

"No, I've heard nothing. You were with him when he died, poor fellow?"

"Ay, that was I, sir; and he went off quiet as a lamb. There was nobody by at the time but me, sir; for you know he had but one friend, and that was Mr. Henry Wilmington: he'd been with him and spent the day quite alone with him, two, or say three, days before; for he was always very attentive to him, that I must say, was Master Harry, as we used to call him; and they used to be never tired, as I thought, of talking together. He'd send me out of the room, would Master Harry, often and often after poor Mr. Selwyn took to his bed; he'd say, 'Come, Charles, go out and get a turn, and leave your master to me.' And that day, too, soon after he came in, they sent me down into the far end of the City, and I was out a long time. When I came back poor master was alone, and looked low and sorrowful like. He told me Mr. Henry was gone down into Cornwall, about some business of his father's, and he sighed and said, 'He thinks we shall, but I know we shall never meet again.' And then he turned upon his pillow, and lay a long time gazing upon the wall, very dull and melancholy."

"Perhaps it was because he had heard bad news," said Mr. Craiglethorpe; "that was the day, as stated in the codicil, that Mr. Harry told him of my death, poor fellow! I didn't think he cared much about me; but that news, and the rest of it, most probably hastened his latter end. Did he mention me at all?"

"Ay, that did he, sir, and had a great love and reverence for you. Often and often have I heard him say you had been a true friend to him."

"I did my best, poor lad ——! And so he was very dull and melancholy, and the news of the loss of the 'Sumatra' and his poor uncle's death vexed him; didn't you say so? and perhaps hastened his end, poor boy?"

"No, that I can take upon myself to say it didn't do," answered Charles; "for he never heard of it."

"No!" cried Mr. Craiglethorpe, starting up from his chair. "What do you mean to say? Never heard of it! Impossible!"

"Nay, sir, it's true. We had given over reading the papers to him, and I scarcely ever cast an eye upon them. How should *we* know anything about it, and Master Harry away, too? Oh no, sir! don't vex yourself on that score: he departed quite easy about you, and almost the last words he said, as I was raising up his head a little by putting my arm under his pillow, thinking to ease him, he turned his dying

eyes, poor gentleman, to me, and said, 'Charles, when my good uncle comes home, you must tell him I remembered him in my last hour, and blessed him for his kindness to the poor orphan boy."

"He was dreaming; he was delirious! he knew it all the time!"

"Nay, sir, he was neither dreaming nor delirious; and now I remember, that very morning before, as he was winding up his watch, he said, 'I'd give you this, Charles, with my other things, which I suppose the executors will let you have, as a matter of course, only I wish it to be given to my uncle.'"

"Did you get the watch?" said Mr. Craiglethorpe, who had now quietly resumed his chair, and sat there with a strange expression upon his face; his eye fixed now upon Charles, now upon the carpet, as if meditating something.

"No, sir, not the watch; but I got the clothes. All the valuables, sir, were taken by the Wilmingtons, as residuary legatees, I think they called it."

"And did you get no legacy?"

"Oh, yes, sir! all his servants were remembered in the will. We took very handsomely under it."

"Did you hear the will read?"

"No, sir: I was gone down to my brother's, for I happened to be very bad; but I made 'em promise I should be sent for to the funeral. However, I didn't get the letter in time, and when I came to town all was over, and the will read, and all settled, and the house shut up; but Mr. Wilmington sent for me, and paid me my legacy, without deduction for legacy tax, as he did to all the rest; and very handsome I thought it of him, sir."

"What was that you were telling me about the watch?" said Mr. Craiglethorpe. "Are you sure the poor dear fellow was spared the shock of hearing of his poor uncle's death? because, when he was dying, you know, his memory might fail, and his thoughts be getting confused."

"Bless you, sir! no more confused than yours are now. I'm certain he died without hearing the bad news, if that's any comfort to you: quite certain of it, Mr. Craiglethorpe."

"But what was that about the watch? Was he in bed?"

"Why, sir, it *is* touching, and must be touching to you, sir; but you shall hear all about it. No, sir, he wasn't in his bed just at that time, because, you see, he used to be got up a little every day to the last; and, bless your soul, he was as clear—as clear to the very last as you or I could be. He went off all on a sudden. There was a complication, they

said; and all thought him in a consumption, poor young gentleman! But it was the heart most of all that was amiss; and he died of that at last, I believe."

"But about the watch?"

"Why, it was that very morning: he died at night, sir, about nine o'clock—just going, as he breathed his last; but this might be about twelve or one. I'd got him up, and he was laid on his sofa; he seemed very ill, and panting worse than usual, poor soul! but he held out his hand for his watch, which he was used to wind up himself, and I gave it him, and he wound it up and laid it upon the little table by him; considering, like, and reading the hour; and then it was he said, 'Charles,' said he, 'I'd give you this watch with my other things, which I suppose the executors will let you have, as a matter of course, only I wish it to be given to my uncle,' says he."

"Did he never say anything at all as if he thought I was dead?"

"Bless you, Mr. Craiglethorpe! how should he? for I am as positive as you sit there he'd not an idea of it. Why, he talked of you a good deal more than ever all that day: people do when they are about to depart, they say. I only remember the watch in particular, because he was so kind to me about it. 'Charles, I'd give you that watch,' says he, 'but I wish it to be given to my uncle;' and, oh! now I recollect, he said, 'Charles, when my uncle comes to England, which I calculate will be about the middle of next May, you go to him, and tell him how kind Mr. Harry Wilmington has been to me; and that I hope he'll be to him what he would have been to me if I'd lived.' I beg your pardon, sir, for not recollecting that before; but, some way, being sure you were dead put all such things out of my head; but I remember them now: they come up clear as day now I see you again, Mr. Craiglethorpe."

"Ay, ay; but could you swear to them?"

"Couldn't I? To be sure I could."

"And would?"

"And would, to be sure, if that would do any good to anybody; particularly to that about the watch, word for word: and his dying speech, poor young gentleman, that I shall never forget—no, not to *my* dying day."

A strange sort of shiver, a peculiar smile, malignant, yet satisfied, were all the signs of particular emotion that Mr. Craiglethorpe showed.

"Pour out another glass of wine, Charles," he said;

which Charles deliberately did, whilst Mr. Craiglethorpe mused.

"You took a large legacy under the will. Was the will there as well as the codicil?"

"Oh, yes! to be sure, sir. Master had made the will six months before. The solicitor wanted me to sign as a witness; but master said, with his own kind smile, 'No, he can't do that, you know, Mr. Mason, because he's a five hundred pound legacy man, under the will, you know;' upon which I bowed lowly, as well I might. Ah! he was a good, generous master and man as ever lived!"

"And you got more by the last will than that?"

"No; I beg your pardon, sir. I said wrong if I said so. Only the legacy duty paid, sir. The legacies were the same, but Mr. Wilmington very handsomely paid the legacy duty for us all."

"Humph!" from Mr. Craiglethorpe.

Another pause; then he said—

"What are you doing in London, Charles? Where do you put up? Perhaps I shall want you again. I'm at No. 65, Pie Lane."

"Bless my stars, Mr. Craiglethorpe!"

"Never mind that; but don't you leave town without letting me know."

And so they parted.

CHAPTER XII.

Various and overwhelming were the emotions with which Mr. Craiglethorpe sought his home, but a sense of cruel exultation was the predominant one. To find a crime where he had only feared a wrong; to exchange the place of helpless victim for that of triumphant avenger; to be no longer the subject of a vexatious error and want of care, which no man could greatly blame, after all, but of a crime which would expose the perpetrator to the utmost vengeance of the law. This was to rise from ignominious defeat to triumphant victory, from weakness to power, from insignificance to celebrity: there is something so humiliating in losing a fortune by a mistake, for which no one is very greatly to blame; to go out in silence, as it were; and something terribly exciting in having been the object of a great and tremendous crime.

Then revenge! that revenge for which he panted, which is so sweet to the unregenerate heart of man! Revenge, a hope of which he had never ventured to indulge in, because it seemed so utterly out of his power; which would have given satisfaction to his embittered heart.

Oh! how that heart swelled as he mounted the little stairs, and entered his humble bed-room! No longer the proud but fallen, helpless, insignificant sufferer, but the mighty and the strong, holding in his hand the thunderbolt which should dash his hard-hearted, haughty, prosperous enemies—prosperous and rich through his misfortunes—to very atoms!

Harry Wilmington! the specious Harry Wilmington, whom every one conspired to praise, and whom he looked upon, and hated, and despised as a mean, hypocritical pretender to generosity, taking advantage of the last hours of his friend, his weakness and his affection, to get possession of all his money at the eleventh hour, and enriched at his expense; that cold, heartless, ungrateful man, whom he once had called his friend: to have this Henry in his power, to have detected him in the commission of a detestable, a mean and

contemptible crime; the Henry Wilmington of whom every one spoke well, and when it had been very gall to his heart every time he had heard him so spoken of!

He walked up and down his little room; he rubbed his hands. It was the first moment of satisfaction he had known since his hapless return; and, oh! how he enjoyed it! What a Satanic smile was on his lip! the bright gleam, as of the serpent, in his eye!

There was no mirror in that room to reflect him back his face; and, alas! there was no mental mirror to reflect him back his mind in that state of fiendish enjoyment.

Poor, pitiable creature! he did not possess moral sense sufficient to feel how greatly, how dreadfully wrong he was.

He thought himself quite justified, because others were wrong; justified, because justice was concerned. Pitiless, hard, revengeful, exulting in the disgrace and downfall of others, it never crossed his mind that he might be committing still more frightful crimes than theirs.

For the first time, the next day Mr. Craiglethorpe was not to be seen at his desk. Nor the next—nor the next.

He was indefatigably employed in hunting out evidence to prove the fact, of which not the slightest doubt now crossed his mind, that the codicil purporting to be Selwyn's was a forged one, and that it had been forged by Harry Wilmington.

Indeed, this piece of justice must be done him: the fact of Selwyn having died in ignorance of his supposed fate seemed to place it beyond dispute that the codicil must have been a forgery; and there was no other being upon earth to whom the slightest suspicion could attach but Harry.

It was years since he had seen Harry: had he but seen him, I believe he would have thought the thing impossible. But he remembered him only as a shy, rather dull boy, particularly quiet and well-behaved, whom he never much liked, and the idea of whom, since his return to England, had been associated with what he considered a mean, sneaking, dirty action. Had he seen him, could he have seen him, blinded by resentment and prejudiced as he was, I believe he could not, even *he* could not, have suspected him for an instant.

The links of truth hang together closely, and are curiously developed by Time. That the codicil had been forged seemed

unquestionable; every minute circumstance confirmed the supposition; nay, rendered any other supposition impossible. That no one had visited Selwyn since the day that the report of the loss of the "Sumatra" reached London, who could by possibility have executed this paper, which, though brief, was done with extraordinary ingenuity and nicety, seemed indisputable. Harry had gone up to his room; Harry had had the house to himself all that morning; all that day, for what anybody knew. He had been seen to go into the back-parlour, in a drawer of which Charles was able to swear the former will lay, to which the codicil was attached; and he was likewise able to swear, that in his hurry that very day, being sent by Mr. Selwyn to fetch a paper out of that drawer, he had left it half-open, with the keys hanging in the lock, which keys were afterwards found lying upon the dining-room table.

The man, having got his legacy, had no further interest in the will, and had never thought about the matter till the day he met Mr. Craiglethorpe; and concluding that Mr. Craiglethorpe was dead, thought it natural enough, indeed was very well pleased that Mr. Henry Wilmingtom, whom he loved very much, should be so much benefited. Being out of town at the time the will was read, he had never heard the particulars, and, consequently, had never had his attention directed to the fact of Selwyn having died in ignorance of what was supposed to have happened.

When he returned to town the house was shut up; his two fellow-servants were gone, and the subject had never recurred to his mind. He thought Mr. Wilmington had behaved very handsomely, as regarded the legacy duty; and he returned to take possession of a little patrimony bequeathed to him by his father in Northamptonshire, and there to live upon the interest of his five hundred pounds.

After Mr. Craiglethorpe's supposed death no one appeared whose interest it was to dispute the codicil. Nobody thought of inquiring as to the fact of the maid-servants having appended their signatures. That was a thing the forger, whoever he was, had been forced to risk; but there seemed not the slightest probability of the question being raised.

As soon as Mr. Wilmington entered upon his office of executor, he had begun, as I have said, by paying off the servants, who were well pleased to receive their money so soon, and the offer of two capital places, one in Northumberland, the other in Devonshire, with which Mr. Wilmington, in his kind consideration, as they thought, had taken care to provide them.

They never guessed nor dreamed—how should they?—that their names appeared as witnesses to the codicil; and they both very well recollected having signed a will: namely, the other.

But now they were hunted out by the indefatigable Mr. Craiglethorpe, and both found to be still living. One, indeed, was settled somewhere in the north, and could not easily be traced; but the other was living in an obscure shop in the borough.

The chain of evidence was thus completed. The names of the attesting witnesses were forged. The one who had been traced out was a girl who officiated in the kitchen, and answered the door in the absence of Charles; and she was ready to swear that she had attended the door the day the codicil purported to have been made, and that she had let no one in or out. Charles had let Mr. Henry Wilmington in; he must have let himself out.

Never was circumstantial evidence more complete. It seemed impossible to attribute the guilt of this forgery to any other living being.

Such was the evidence which Mr. Craiglethorpe had obtained. And when he had assured himself of this, his satisfaction was perfectly barbarous. He was not like the same man. His frame had recovered its elasticity, his eye more than its usual brightness, his face more than its usual animation; he was in high spirits, and tossed his clerk's place and all his unnatural humility to the winds. He now went in and out of the counting-house of Estcourt and Jones upon the old terms of an equal and a friend.

Not that he had let them into his secret: *that* nothing would tempt him to do till the victim of his vengeance was in his hands. But he had told them in his way, with thanks for the good turn they had done him, that some circumstances had come to light which rendered this sort of place no longer necessary; and, assuming at once his usual air, and resuming his place in society, was just the same man as if the mortifications of the last six months had never been.

The gentlemen knew he was close and reserved by temper; they asked no questions; were happy to receive him upon the old terms, auguring from the satisfaction, nay, exhilaration of his manner, that it was no ordinary piece of good fortune which had befallen him.

It was not till the messenger arrived in London with the intelligence of Mr. Henry Wilmington's arrest, that Mr. Craiglethorpe indulged himself in the high gratification of confiding his story to his two friends, and communicating to them, in a paroxysm of indignation, what he termed Harry Wilmington's impudent letter.

"The young scoundrel! Does he think to buy me off in this manner? Does he look upon me as such a fool, that I'm to be blinded by such an impudent attempt at imposition as this? And why, my masters, I beg leave to ask, if our conscience was so mighty delicate, was I suffered to lie six months upon a dunghill, till a tap upon the shoulder awakened our sleeping equities and fine feelings?"

This was the only time that through the affair Mr. Craiglethorpe was known to give way to such expressions, venting his passion in words. But nothing, I believe, that had occurred offended him so deeply as the contempt, as he looked upon it, expressed of his understanding, by this endeavour, as he thought, to cajole him with fine words.

Estcourt sneered and smiled sarcastically; Jones hemmed and hawed, and owned it was very bad.

And Mr. Craiglethorpe felt more unforgiving than ever.

The necessary legal ceremonies have been gone through, and Harry Wilmington, the innocent, is committed for felony.

What he felt during the hurried journey to town; what he felt when brought before the justice of the peace who had signed the warrant; what, when, the *mittimus* being duly signed, he found himself once more in the hands of the constable and upon his way to Newgate, it is difficult to describe. The dizziness, the strange bewilderment, the confusion of thought, that incredulity, that dreamy sense of unreality which overpowers the mind when first overtaken by a calamity, the extremity of which exceeds all that the wildest imagination could have believed possible: all this he felt; and, owing to the extreme sensibility of his frame, in a degree that exceeded even the ordinary distraction of thought and feeling upon such an occasion.

As he had travelled rapidly along in the rolling post-chaise; as familiar scenes, the trees, the hedges, the fields, so well known and so loved, flew past him, rendered visible

by the pale light of the dawn; he could scarcely persuade himself that he was awake.

His eyes now fixed upon the window, now turning to the two men between whom he was placed, he seemed endeavouring to understand, to realize what had passed. Had he really left them? his wife, his sister, his friend? Had he left his home, his sweet Welsh home? and was it possible, as a felon? as a criminal? Was he awake? should he awake?

The position in which he uneasily sat, the noise and rattle of the rumbling vehicle, added to this distressing confusion of his senses. He wanted to be still, he wanted to breathe, to review his situation, to decide upon what should be done. He was innocent, perfectly innocent, not only of the actual commission of such a crime, but of the slightest suspicion that a crime by which he had so largely benefited had ever been committed. Then why, if so perfectly and purely innocent, was his cheek blanched and his hands quivering? Why had he the aspect almost of one guilty?

Alas! alas! what cruel suspicions were his! The hope sometimes alternated with his painful fears that after, all no crime of the sort had really been committed.

Then his eye would brighten, the colour rise again to his face, and a glow of joy warm his poor heart. How easily he had suffered himself to be depressed, and what weakness he had shown! Why hesitate as to his means of defence! His defence should be to deny the forgery *in toto*.

Why had he so readily admitted to himself that there had been any crime at all? Oh! it was his base, cowardly, spiritless temper, which suffered him to sink under an accusation of this kind, instead of casting it back with indignation and defiance against his adversary.

When such thoughts took their turn, he would rise up from his desponding posture, thrown back in the chaise, and would assume a more cheerful tone and manner, and endeavour to talk a little to his companions; but they were sleepy, and dozed away, leaving him to his own thoughts. Then fresh doubts and terrors, terrors that made the blood freeze in his veins, would arise again, and his agonies, cramped, fettered, forced to be still there as he sat, would drive him almost distracted. In such distressing alternatives of thought and feeling the long journey of twenty-four hours was completed, and he was brought before the justice of the peace who had signed the warrant. He had entered the room with a hope, amounting almost to conviction, that he should be able to disprove the fact of any crime at all having been committed; but he found, alas! that was not to be done. That

the will was a forged one did not, it was evident, in the opinion of those acquainted with all the circumstances, admit of a doubt.

And when Henry was informed of the reasons upon which this conviction was founded; was asked whether he had communicated the death of Mr. Craiglethorpe to his friend before he left London, with a caution not to say anything that might criminate himself; and when, having answered in the negative, his own letter, which had been delivered by Charles to the justice unopened, was shown him, and the positive evidence of the servant communicated; struck to the heart by this unanswerable proof of the codicil being supposititious, his countenance suddenly fell, a deadly paleness came over his face, and his heart seemed almost to stand still. His dreadful but vague suspicions assumed a form of certainty, and the conviction was irresistibly borne in upon his mind that one, and but one, living creature could by possibility be the criminal: and that man was his own father!

He leaned back against the wall in silence when the justice had concluded what he had to say. He had perceived with surprise, but with a clear feeling of relief, that not one person who had come forward seemed to have the slightest idea that his father had been in the house that fatal morning.

No one was known to have been there but himself. The act must have been perpetrated during a certain period of time; for Charles, upon his return, had taken the keys of the drawer from the dining-room table, and carried them to his master, in whose possession they remained till his death.

There were none to testify how Henry had been engaged whilst in the house; and even if there were, would he, could he bring them forward? Could he justify himself, when his justification would lead to the inevitable conviction of the being from whom he had received his own?

"Have you nothing to urge in your justification; no account to give of your way of spending the time during which this crime must have been committed?" asked the justice, who could not help regarding the unfortunate young man with compassion. "Nothing?"

"I would rather say nothing till I have consulted with my legal adviser," was Henry's reply, speaking with hesitation and difficulty.

And the justice shook his head. Could there be a more palpable sign than this of conscious guilt? In his opinion it amounted almost to an avowal.

"Then I fear there is nothing to be done but to write out

the warrant for your committal to Newgate," he said with gravity.

He ordered his clerk to draw up the necessary paper; and then, handing it to the constable, he delivered the wretched young man to his custody.

The hope which had supported Henry had gradually yielded to conviction as the evidence was laid before him; and the cruel certainty had strengthened as his recollection of every circumstance of that morning revived. He received the decision of the justice in gloomy silence; and, his soul bowed down with shame and sorrow, submitted to his fate, and left the room without again looking up.

And soon he approached the grim and threatening prison in which he was to be confined, and entered, innocent, yet bent to the earth by the sense of another's crime, this dreary abode of suffering and of sin; to share, innocent and yet heart-broken, and with a shuddering horror, the fate of many an audacious, hardened criminal, and many a penitent, trembling culprit, in this earthly hell.

The huge iron-bound gates unclose; the hackney-coach rolls along. The doors close behind him. Hope seems to be shut out as they are heard barring and bolting him in. He in a prison; a felon's abode! bringing with him, miserable young man! a sense of innocence, but without the consolations of innocence; guiltlessness, without the trust or the security of guiltlessness.

"Oh, Thou who hast presented this bitter cup to my lips! give me courage and strength to drink it unshrinking to the dregs!"

This short, brief, earnest prayer tranquillised him. It was muttered as he entered the cell which was to be henceforward his chamber.

Then farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear.

So exclaims the young, generous, and courageous creature, in the last extremity of her distress; and thus felt Harry Wilmington as he entered his small apartment, and the certainty that he was a prisoner was realised to him.

CHAPTER XIII.

The solicitor of the family had been sent for immediately upon Henry's arrival in London, and he now appeared.

He was an elderly man, with a remarkably kind and gentle expression of countenance, though his eye had that brightness and quickness which usually characterise those belonging to a profession that requires a constant exercise of the watchful faculties.

He loved Harry Wilmington with the sincerest affection; that affection which such men feel for the children of those with whom they have been long connected in the intimate and confidential relation which exists between a solicitor and his client. But he also esteemed and respected him; for he had had abundance of opportunity for observing the genuine worth, the sterling honour, and undeviating rectitude of his character; and he now entered the small chamber in which the unfortunate young man was confined, looking pale and agitated himself. But he held out his hand as he came in, with all the cordial heartiness of one who knew he *could* not be guilty.

Henry grasped it, and there was a short silence. Neither of them, indeed, found it possible just then to speak.

Mr. Kingston was the first to break it.

"This is a strange, unaccountable business, my young friend," said he, "and I am heartily sorry that you should have got into such a scrape; but, courage! we must see and get you out of it. Old Craiglethorpe is a sharp customer, unquestionably, and a very ingenious, as he appears to be a very vindictive man; but it will require a more than usual share of ingenuity, I take it, to convict Mr. Henry Wilmington of a crime."

And he smiled, with what he intended to be a cheering smile.

But Harry's countenance responded not: his eyes seemed as if they could not meet those of his friend, which were fixed upon him. He kept them bent upon the floor; a struggle

seemed going on within; he grew paler; his looks betrayed a deadly sickness of the heart which oppressed him.

The solicitor looked at him with surprise, then with anxiety, and then with a look of horror, as he exclaimed—

"For heaven's sake! Mr. Wilmington, look up. Don't look in that way; your face would be enough to convict you with men who did not know you as well as I do."

"Would it?" said he, starting and looking up, and pressing one hand over his eyes, as if to dissipate the cloud which darkened them. The good solicitor still held the other in his.

"Would it? Why, to be sure it would. Come, young man, shake it off; a little more courage, a little more spunk," the kind old man kept repeating, trying to smile all the time. "The only want you ever had in my eyes was a little deficiency in that way, Master Harry. This is a very odious and painful business. It must be dreadful to a man of your feelings to find himself committed on a charge of felony; but accusation is not proof, and committal is not conviction, as many a worthy fellow has found reason to know.

"But, indeed," added he, more gravely and seriously, "you must *not* give way to the influence of a perhaps too sensitive feeling of things. You *must* rouse yourself; you *must* summon up your courage, your resignation, all that is man *within* you, all those qualities for which your friends esteem you. You *must* meet those unpleasant circumstances as they *must* be met."

He found his hand pressed as he said this; and then the unfortunate young man lifted up to him an eye so full of tenderness, of gratitude, of affection, of unspeakable melancholy, that tears, unusual visitors to that calm and well-disciplined man, swelled to the eyes of the good solicitor as he beheld him.

"Nay, this will never do," said he, hastily taking out his handkerchief. "I don't know what's the matter with me to-day. Come, come; let us sit down. Send for a dish of tea for your old friend, for I would rather have it than wine, when I am particularly interested; and let us set about and see what's best to be done for your defence. I mean to blow this miserable old fellow's accusation to atoms, as I feel sure I shall be able to do before I have heard one word of the case."

They sat down.

But, far from what he expected, instead of a clear account of himself, and a distinct refutation of every particular of the charge, Harry hesitated, changed colour, stammered, and seemed unwilling to speak.

The solicitor was again lost in amazement. He began to feel a little impatient. Nothing could shake his conviction of the young man's innocence; but he was provoked at all this apparent weakness of character, when the utmost decision and self-exertion were so necessary. "The point," he said, "to make is, to disprove the commission of any forgery having been committed at all. That is a much more complete and triumphant answer to the charge than the endeavour to prove you individually innocent; and that the codicil was *not* forged must be as clear as daylight, because it must be true. It is impossible that it can be anything else but true."

Henry looked at him with a glazing, clouded eye, but answered nothing.

"Really, Mr. Henry! really, at such a time! What can be the matter with you, sir? Forgive me, but the importance of the case —— I must beg —— Rally your spirits, sir."

Silent still, and the cheek, the forehead, the lips, ashy pale.

Again Mr. Kingston eyed him earnestly, searchingly, anxiously, and his cheek began to grow pale too, and the light of his clear gray eye to darken. Yet the faith which the good have in the good still supported him.

He shook off the disagreeable, the insupportable feelings that seemed slowly creeping over him in spite of himself, chilling his enthusiastic confidence, and trying his faith and courage.

He sat looking at Henry for some time, more and more bewildered at his strange aspect and strange silence.

At last he said—

"Time presses, Mr. Henry, and we must begin to take our measures. What have you to say? I beg of you to be explicit with me. How else is it possible, in the name of all that's good, that I can serve you? Put me in possession of all the circumstances of that day upon which you are accused of having forged this supposed codicil, just as they actually occurred; that is the first thing to be ascertained. Come," taking out a small portable silver inkstand and a roll of paper, "let me take notes of it. Still silent! Mr. Henry Wilmington!" with a slight asperity in his tone, "let me beseech you not thus utterly to forsake yourself. Have you *nothing* to tell me?"

"Nothing!" dropped from the pallid lips.

"Nothing! Good heavens! Can you give no account of yourself on that day? Tax your memory, sir. Endeavour to recollect where you were and what you were about at that time. The impossibility of your being guilty is to me so

absolutely certain, that if I had seen you, as I thought, actually employed upon such a paper, I would not have believed my own senses. Character is much to a jury, but it is not all. The best exculpation is a clear account of how you were engaged during the time which elapsed from the moment you entered Mr. Selwyn's house up to the time he was informed of Mr. Craiglethorpe's demise, a space of not more than eight-and-forty hours, as I understand."

"Do you not know? He—never was informed of it."

The solicitor started from his chair; dismay, horror, astonishment written in every feature.

"How! What! Henry! Do I hear aright? What is it you are saying?"

"The truth, Mr. Kingston! Selwyn died in ignorance of his uncle's death. I thought he knew it, but he never did."

"My God! my God!"

And the old man burst into a flood of tears. Quite overcome, he sank into a chair, covered his face with his handkerchief, and sobbed like a child.

"My friend! my excellent, worthy, kind friend!" said Harry, tenderly; and he endeavoured to take and press one of the thin withered hands which the old man was now pressing over his eyes.

He withdrew his hand, and looking piteously at Henry, said—

"You! Oh, Henry, unsay that! I didn't hear rightly! I couldn't hear rightly! Say it again. No, no, no! don't say it again! It can't, it shan't be true."

Harry shook his head mournfully.

"Because I understand," continued Mr. Kingston, starting up again, "that the very preamble of the contested codicil declares, that upon account of the intelligence of the death of Mr. Craiglethorpe, that morning communicated to him by his dear friend, Henry Wilmington, he —— he, &c. &c. In the name of all that's good, you don't mean to say you never *did* tell him?"

"No; I never did."

"Why, then, you were nothing less than mad!" cried the old man, bursting at last into a rage; "and what on earth could induce you, then? Such folly is incredible. Why was it put in the preamble?"

Harry turned away. Perhaps, of all the bitter moments of that night and day, this was the bitterest. He understood the implication. He saw that his friend's confidence in his integrity had given way.

He walked to the thickly-barred window; he stood a few

minutes irresolute, battling with himself. The trial was almost too great for his fortitude. Should he not? to him, his friend, his adviser, at least? No, no; his resolution was taken. He stood a little while there to recover himself, and then returning to the table, sat down by his old friend, whose cheeks were by this time as white as his own, and said—

"Though *I* did not, some one else might."

"True," replied the other, in a hollow, broken voice; "but did some one else? Heavens and earth! Mr. Henry, can't you see," recovering the usual energy of his manner, "the whole turns upon this:—If it can be proved he died in ignorance of the loss of the ship, the codicil of course falls to nothing. Our outward defences are taken; we must fall back upon the other. You did not do it?"

He looked up; one look; it said everything: it said, "And you! can *you* ask that question of me?"

The answer was a sudden grasp of his hand, whilst the colour rose to the good old man's cheek again.

"Well, then," said he, cheerfully, "it's a mysterious business, to be sure; but the first thing must be to exculpate you, and our best exculpation will be to hunt out the real offender; for that an offence has been committed, I am afraid, after what you tell me, there can be no doubt. So," again resuming his pen, "let us have as exact and minute an account of all you were doing with yourself that eight-and-forty hours as your memory can supply; and then trust me for hunting out evidence, not only to support you in the affirmation of the truth, but likewise to convict the real criminal: one will help the other. Come, let me have your story first."

"I have no story to tell."

"What do you mean, my dear sir?" again throwing down his pen, flinging himself back in his chair, and looking at him with astonishment. "Impossible! Your memory cannot so entirely have failed you. You were in the house, unfortunately, that very day, and quite alone; for the old man-servant, I find, went out, but he is ready to prove he let you in. And as to the girl who usually attended the door when he was absent, she never saw you go out. There is no evidence of how long you might or might not have been in the house, and have had it all to yourself, as it were. Now you must tell me what really happened, and what you did with your time that morning, and so prove the impossibility of your having executed this cursed job; and perhaps you may remember seeing some one else about, who might have done it; that —— How you shudder, sir! how ill you look! Let

me call and ask for a glass of wine for you; what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing! don't look at me; don't heed me."

"Not heed you! Indeed, indeed, Henry Wilmington, you pain an old friend very much."

"Do I?" and again a sweet melancholy smile, such a smile as innocent suffering, and innocent suffering alone, could have given, passed faintly over his face. "Do I? I am very sorry for it."

"Oh dear! oh dear! Shall we never begin? When did you hear of this old wretch's death first, to begin at the beginning? That morning of March the 25th, when the codicil is dated? for I have been to Doctors' Commons and ascertained all that."

Henry considered a little, and then said, "Yes."

"Why, Mr. Henry, you need not be afraid of criminating yourself with me. Let me give you the maxim of a very eminent man in his branch of the profession: 'If you know yourself to be innocent, you cannot be too frank and even unguarded in your answers.' His legal advisers can hardly let a man, under such circumstances, say too much for himself, for truth will out. If he is guilty, it is another story. But then, as another eminent man, though in a lower grade of the profession, said, 'If a man is guilty, and will not confide it to me, it is impossible I can do anything for him.'"

Henry made no reply to this but by turning away his face again to the window, so that its expression was concealed from Mr. Kingston, who, rather more coldly, went on.

"And you went that very morning down to Mr. Selwyn's, with the intention of disclosing this event to him, and you did not do it; and why did you not do it?"

"Because I found him extremely ill, and I really could not venture to do it," said Henry, turning round again. "Charles, the principal witness, declares that he died in ignorance of the fact: this much I learned from Mr. Grimston, the magistrate who committed me, but——"

"Very unfortunate; very: we must strive for evidence that, some way or other, he *did* know. Tax your memory; it is scarcely likely that you should not have given him a hint to prepare him, left him at the mercy of accidental circumstances, as it were. But then, my goodness!" jumping up and slapping his thigh, "what a dolt I was not to see it! what a triumphant exculpation for you! If you knew that he was not informed, you would never have inserted that in the preamble. It *must* be some one else, don't you

see? Quite right; quite right: you are ready to swear, you say ——"

Henry clasped his hands, but he shared not in the exultation of his friend.

"Ask me no more questions," at last he said; "I am not used to be cross-examined; I shall get into contradictions."

"But you did not inform him; it was your belief that he was not informed by any one; that he died in ignorance?"

"It was my belief, till this very day, that he did not die in ignorance, or the contradiction would have struck me upon reading the codicil; for though I certainly did not speak to him upon the subject at that time, I, fearing it might be abruptly communicated in some other way, when he had rallied a little, which at that moment I had no reason to fear but he would, wrote a letter in his room whilst he was dozing, in which I broke it to him, as warily as it was in my power, and I left orders that it should be given to him in the evening, if he were, as usual, better at that time. Of course, till this day I never doubted but that the letter had been delivered; but now I do: it appears certain that it never was."

"Say no more; say no more!" said Mr. Kingston, with a look of the deepest mortification; "that defence, that triumphant defence, is at an end. It now only remains to exculpate yourself, and turn out the real culprit.

"Now, how long were you in the house that morning? and did any one come in or go out during your stay? for there is a small circumstance which I have not yet mentioned, but which I have traced out, which limits the time during which this supposititious codicil could have been placed where it was found. It seems that Charles was sent down by his master to fetch a paper out of the drawer in which the will was deposited. He had to turn over one or two, and, among others, will swear he saw the will lying there: hearing his bell ringing violently, he hurried up-stairs, and found him very badly; so badly that he was detained some time, and then was sent by you into the City, and quite forgot that he had left the drawer half-open, and the keys hanging in the lock. And it was not till he came back in the afternoon that he found the drawer locked, and the keys lying upon the table, which he took up to his master. Now, the girl can swear that she saw you enter that room for a moment or two, before you went up to Selwyn, and Charles can testify that there he found you; and nothing more is known of what you did with yourself after Charles went out; for it appears you let yourself out of the house, and no one knows or can tell when. Now, some one else must have been in that house,

and in that room, during that morning, and that some one must be the culprit. Now, Harry, I say again, tax your memory. Did you see no one come in? Did you let no one in? Have you reason to suspect no one of having been there that morning? Tax your memory; speak out: you look strangely, though you look away from me. Answer me frankly, at least yes or no. In the name of all that's vexatious!" cried the old man in a passion, at last, for he could really hold no longer, "in the name of all that's vexatious, you can at least answer me that!"

"I would rather answer no more questions," was the reply, with a face darker than ever.

The conviction which had at last reached his own mind seemed gathering fresh strength whilst Mr. Kingston was speaking: viewed in that light, not a doubt could remain. The faint hopes which still at moments flattered him of some other explanation were dissipated. The mist which concealed the fearful truth cleared away, and the dreadful reality stood displayed in all its horror.

It was with difficulty that he could articulate the last few words.

But he did not yield to his emotion: he vanquished by a violent effort the inclination he felt to sink his face upon his arms on the table, and yield to his feelings of frightful distress. He denied himself even this relief; he endeavoured to look calm, composed; but he felt as if nature must give way, and he must die.

Oh! if he could but then have died!

Again, again his friend looked at him in sorrow, not unmixed with anger; but the anger soon faded into pity.

"Then I can do nothing for you," he said, sadly.

"I believe not," replied Henry.

The friend felt wounded by this reserve; the man of eminence in his profession, offended by this apparent want of confidence in his skill; the man of the world, the man accustomed to penetrate into the hidden mysteries of human nature, was perplexed and confounded.

"Why did you send for me, then?" he said at last.

"Why, indeed?" was the reply.

"And then, what do you mean to do? What steps do you mean to take for your defence? Do you know what you are about? Do you know what would follow conviction? Good God! Mr. Henry, are you aware, or can you be ignonorant, that the punishment for such a crime is death?"

"I know it," was the answer.

"And how do you mean to conduct your defence? how

will you stand upon your defence? You cannot mean to plead Guilty?"

"No, I shall plead Not Guilty. It is usual, I believe. If they give credit to the assertion of my innocence, well; if not, why, well too!" he cried in a burst of agony. "My wife! my sister! my love! my Flavia!"

"Ay, sir," said Mr. Kingston, gravely, "you should think of that sweet young lady. What your motives may be for this most unaccountable—pray, excuse me!—mode of conducting your affairs, I know not; but we none of us stand alone in the world; we none of us can sink into an abyss of misery without dragging others after us."

"Who should know that better than my wretched self?" he thought, but said not. He continued walking about the room in a paroxysm of despair; then, with a sort of desperate coolness, he sat down by Mr. Kingston, and said, "Tell me, for I never exactly knew, what are the penalties attached to a conviction of felony. Corruption of blood! confiscation of property! What is corruption of blood? It sounds something horrid."

"A man has neither ancestors nor successors; the law severs him as a corrupt member from his family. He thenceforth has neither child nor father."

Henry looked quickly up; a flash, as it were, of strange meaning passed across his face.

"It is well," he said, gloomily.

"No, it is not well; it is perfect unaccountable insanity," said Mr. Kingston, hastily.

"Perhaps so. I seem to have lost the power to think."

"Indeed, so it seems," said Mr. Kingston, beginning again to gather some hope from the strange manner Henry had assumed within the last half-hour. He really began to believe, almost to hope, that he had lost his senses; he thought it would be better to leave him to recover himself; he began to think that the next morning he should find him more reasonable. There was not much time to be lost; the trial would come on in about three weeks; but one single night lost could not be of much importance.

So he deliberately took up and closed his silver inkstand, folded his paper, and placed them both in his pocket, still looking at Henry all the time. He now, under the various alternations of extreme misery, had sunk into his chair again quite exhausted. The momentary irritation of his good old friend had been but the anger of a moment; he said now, as kindly and soothingly as ever—

"I see, my dear sir, that this agitating day has really been

too much for you. I advise you to take a little rest; you seem quite ill. I will leave you now, and as I go out, tell the turnkey to buy you some tea; it will be better for you than wine. Try to sleep; if you can't sleep, try to keep yourself still. I will come again to you to-morrow, if you will let me; and cheer up! we shall find all come right, never fear. When you are a little more composed we will settle our proceedings. Good night, Mr. Henry; good night!"

He went to the door, but returned.

"Have you anything to communicate to your father? Shall I call upon him? No doubt he knows all that has happened; but he will be anxious to hear what we have concluded upon. Where is he? at Roehampton?"

"I do not exactly know where he is," said Henry; "but thank you. I would rather you made no attempt to see him just yet. Not—not—you know, till you can carry him something more—something satisfactory. No, thank you, Kingston! You are very kind; too kind; kinder than I——than we—— But not till to-morrow; for you will come again to-morrow."

"Most certainly, unless you forbid it, and as early as possible."

And so they wrung hands and parted.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was about nine o'clock upon the evening of that day that a chariot and four, containing two ladies within, drove up to the Adelphi, and stopped at the door of one of the principal hotels.

The external appointments, the lady's-maid, and the smart footman upon the box, the whole appearance of the equipage, bespoke the rank and importance of the new arrivals; and they were received with abundance of cordiality by the host and hostess, not accustomed, of late years, to have much to do with the denizens of the fashionable world.

The two ladies descended from their carriage, the black veils that hung round their plain straw bonnets drawn down over their faces; and, the taller and the one who appeared to be the elder asking to be shown to a quiet apartment upstairs which looked upon the river, they followed the mistress of the house in silence into a large and lofty room, with a door at either end, which they were informed opened into two bed-rooms at their disposal.

The mistress of the hotel looked round to see if everything was in its place, then proceeded to open the doors, which showed each a comfortable-looking bed-room, and asked whether this apartment would be to their satisfaction, adding that there were several others at her disposal if they would like to visit them and make their choice.

Neither lady cast more than a cursory glance around, and then the elder one, thanking the landlady, and saying it was just what they wanted, begged her to send up their maid.

And what refreshment would they be pleased to take?

"What will you have, my love?" said the taller lady, going up to the slight, youthful-looking creature, who had already seated herself upon a chair in an obscure corner, shaded by the window-curtain.

She lifted up her head when thus addressed, and her lips through her black veil might be seen to move, but not a sound issued from them.

The other lady made no further attempt, but returning to

the mistress of the house, again requested that the maid might be sent up immediately with her dressing-box and luggage into the bed-rooms, adding that she would send down word by her what they would have by-and-by.

And so, with some little perseverance, they got rid of the landlady; and then Caroline returned to the window, and sitting down by the side of her companion, threw her arms round her, pressed her hand tenderly against her bosom, and stooping down, kissed her poor wan forehead in silence.

Flavia did not speak, but she lifted up those large, most beautiful eyes, in gratitude and affection to her friend: even in this hour of suffering beyond expression, there was still room left in that heart for all the soft and grateful feelings. She was so good that even this bitterest anguish could not embitter her. She could still feel all the sweetness of a grateful heart; and those tender, softening, gentle consolations which attend upon a loving, affectionate temper, when receiving the kindness and consolation of a friend.

How many are there, alas! who, in the selfishness, the irritation, or it may be the passion of excessive grief, reject or are unable to taste such consolations! Such wait upon the generous, the patient, and the submissive; upon those who have lived in the habits of affection; upon those who have learned to receive affliction in faith and humility, and to accept the most unexpected and overwhelming misfortunes with fortitude and resignation.

But she could not speak, and this alarmed Caroline very much. During the whole of their frightful journey she had been perfectly sensible, calm, and composed, evidently alive to everything around her; for she kept pressing her friend's hand tenderly from time to time, and often strove, as it were, to speak; and her eyes were full of meaning, and her lips moved frequently, but no sound issued from them.

Her patient fortitude, the childlike and gentle submission of her demeanour; those sweet young features, bearing the impress of the deepest anguish; those eyes, once so bright and gay, now filled with a mournful, astonished, dreary sorrow, spoke volumes to poor Caroline's heart. But it was well for her that she had this sweet young creature to attend to—this still greater sufferer than herself to support. This genuine and generous sympathy was almost the only thing at that moment which could have saved her from distraction.

She had consoled, soothed, comforted her poor Flavia during the journey, as well as she could; but who or what could console her? She was in such a state of agonising doubt that she knew not what to say or do. To declare her

belief in Henry would have been to insult him and all three of them. Of course, not a shadow as to that ever crossed their minds; but this did little to relieve their distress.

To have been accused, arrested, carried off, imprisoned as a felon, that was enough for Flavia; her imagination seemed to travel no farther. This had been sufficient: she thought not of a trial or its consequences, I believe; she knew he was innocent, and imprisoned as a criminal; and the shock, the surprise, the anguish, had already done their work with her.

But Caroline's present doubts, fears, and suspicions were from time to time glancing across her mind. She could not believe, she felt it impossible to believe, but that the whole was some dreadful unreality, some spectral dream, some mistake, from which they must all soon awaken; and yet the circumstances of the codicil (a something she never had quite liked or understood about it), things would start as it were into her recollection; and then her heart would stand still for a few moments, and the hand which Flavia held in hers became icy cold.

Then Flavia would lift it up and kiss it, and gently rub it between her own, and look into Caroline's eyes, and softly stroke her wan cheek, but still without uttering a word.

Thus they had travelled to town; and they reached it at last, as Caroline feared, too late to be admitted into the prison that night.

Flavia, however, soon raised her head from the shoulder of her kind friend; and looking at her again, tried to speak, then shook her head sorrowfully, as much as to say, it would not do; and taking up the little golden pencil which hung by a chain round her neck, she wrote upon Caroline's fair white hand—

"Let us go to him."

"My dear, I fear it is too late."

She shook her head impatiently, and tried to say, "No, no; do, do;" but could not. Her gestures, however, spoke for her.

"Well, my love; as you will. But take some sal volatile first, my dear. It is in my dressing-box. Try to recover yourself a little more, sweet girl, before you see him; and then make up your mind to be disappointed, for I fear the gates will be shut for the night."

Again she showed by gestures her impatience to be gone.

Caroline rang and ordered a coach immediately; and then, hearing the maid busy in one of the bed-rooms, went to her dressing-box and brought out some anti-spasmodic drops.

"Take these, my darling Flavia!" said she. "You will try to speak to him; won't you?"

A sweet intelligent smile, and a cheerful promise was given by the eye.

"Then take these, and keep quite quiet till the carriage arrives."

She did as she was bid. Nay, more; she went to the sofa, threw herself down, and tried to compose herself to sleep. Caroline kissed her, and covered her with a shawl; and then she, too, threw herself into a corner of the same couch, and sat there mute and motionless.

"The coach is at the door, ladies," said a waiter, coming in.

Flavia started up, trembling terribly. Caroline rose, and put her arm under hers.

"Shall you want your servant to attend you?"

"No. Tell the man to drive to Fleet Street."

"What number, please, madam?"

"I will tell him when we get there."

Flavia trembled so dreadfully that she could hardly get into the coach. She seemed to be making desperate efforts with herself to keep still; but it was impossible. All that poor Caroline could hope was, that when she actually saw her husband, these distressing symptoms would give way to tears, and that she would weep plentifully, for she had not as yet shed one tear since Henry's departure; and that thus her voice would be restored, and this strange effect upon the nerves would cease.

But when they arrived at the gate of Newgate, the hour was, as she had anticipated, too late. They could not be admitted until ten o'clock the next morning.

At this announcement the poor young wife turned her face away to the side of the coach, and then she began to sob in a strange hysterical manner, as the carriage, by Caroline's direction, drove away upon its return home.

"Don't, don't, dearest Flavia! My love, you break my heart," said poor Caroline, her courage at last quite overcome. "Pray don't, if you can help it; Flavia, my own dear love! pray don't."

She evidently made every effort to check this sad convulsion. She laid her hand upon Caroline's. She tried to smile. Then a violent fit of hysterical sobbing would come on; then she would check herself, and take the hand again, and keep it, sobbing and trembling all the while.

Ah! thou vindictive avenger, triumphing in the idea of revenge, of retribution, of bringing up to punishment the man who had wronged and injured you! Ah! man who

dared to be cruel and implacable to his erring fellow-man! Not erring in that he brought a criminal to justice, but in that he did it gladly, with triumph, with exultation, with satisfaction! You never reflected upon anything of this kind; you never thought of the innocent hearts that might be breaking; you did not do this act of justice, as you deemed it, sorrowing, reluctant, hesitating, shuddering at the misery you must occasion. Oh, no! you are exhilarated by this victory; you have become quite another being; you are self-satisfied and content, restored to your own self-opinion: quite a personage again among men. Oh, yes! you are dining cheerfully with two ill-dispositioned men, the heartless and sarcastic unbeliever in goodness or in God, and the worshipper of mammon, who, provided the business goes on well and the venison is roasted to a turn, care little for all these things.

Oh, yes, Mr. Craiglethorpe! there you are sitting, sipping your Madeira, and feeling yourself very particularly comfortable; and this sweet, good, innocent, excellent young creature, this once gay, playful, happy child, is quivering and shaking, and breaking as upon the wheel of her agony; and Caroline, the admirable Caroline, is enduring the anguish of her own wounds with the heroism of a Portia.

I say nothing of Henry. You thought him guilty, and with you to be guilty is to be unworthy of all commiseration. But these innocents! the friends of the culprit! Why do you never think of them? You know he has a young wife and a sister; but what care you? You know he has a father; but this is one cause of your exultation. The sword will reach him through his son's side.

It has reached him already.

What is become of that miserable man?

Henry had refused the offer made by Mr. Kingston of visiting his father, under the fear of his receiving the first announcement of what had happened before the eyes of a sagacious observer like that gentleman; he had determined that it was best to write, and regretted, as soon as Mr. Kingston was gone, that he had not asked him to put a letter into the post for him. He now, however, thought it best not to lose any time in making the communication; and a turnkey entering, desired him to find a messenger to go to Wimbledon, saying he supposed there would be no objection to his writing a letter to his father; and inquired whether the regulations of the prison would require it to be sent unsealed.

"Oh!" said the man, "five shillings will set all that matter right."

"I must ask you to get me pen, ink, and paper," putting a half-sovereign into his hand.

The man looked mighty civil upon this; and, immediately going forth to execute his commands, soon returned with the necessary things.

Henry wrote to his father.

HENRY TO MR. WILMINGTON.

"MY DEAR FATHER—Prepare yourself for something that will distress you excessively. Summon up all your fortitude and resolution to meet a most unexpected and terrible blow. Last night I was arrested at my own house, and upon a charge the most unexpected to me; namely, forgery of poor Selwyn's will. I need say no more: this intelligence will, I know, shock you greatly, and overwhelm you, I fear, with grief. But bear up, my dear father; I am supported in this trying situation in a manner I could scarcely have hoped from myself; but so it is: and yet it is necessary that you should prepare yourself for the worst. Circumstances that I cannot explain have rendered it impossible for me to stand upon my defence in the way my legal advisers would suggest, and I cannot disguise from myself what the result must in all probability be. Therefore, my dear father, I write to beg of you to maintain as much composure as possible, under a blow which I know you will feel so keenly. Depend upon it, I will make every effort to save myself, consistent with my sense of what circumstances call upon me to do. I will not ask you to come and see me at present: the meeting might upset us both. Comfort yourself, support yourself, my dearest father; my heart bleeds for you. I know what you would suffer, and would to God I could spare you this, as I gladly would all other suffering!

"HENRY WILMINGTON."

On the superscription was put, "To be delivered to Mr. Wilmington when quite alone."

CHAPTER XV.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington were sitting together the evening of that eventful day. It had just struck eleven o'clock; they had long finished tea, and were placed by the window, which looked out upon the garden. The moon was up, and shone upon the trees, and shrubs, and vases, and flower-baskets of that beautiful garden; but they neither of them heeded either the soft moonlight, the tender shadows, or the extreme loveliness of the scene before them. There was no one to admire, no vanity to be gratified; and the pure sense of beauty, the intense enjoyment of such scenes for their own sake alone, was not for them.

They sat there with a beautifully inlaid but small table between them, lighted by an elaborate silver-gilt lamp that stood near, and were playing at *écarté*, when a servant came in and said Mr. Wilmington was wanted.

"Who wants him at this time of night?" said Lizzy, pettishly.

"I wish, Raimond, you would not let people disturb us after dinner. Tell the person, whoever he be, to go away, and come again at a proper hour to-morrow morning."

"If you please, sir," repeated the butler, coming up to his master, and speaking in a low, agitated voice, "would you be so good as to step this way for a moment?"

The man's voice and look struck Mr. Wilmington and his wife at the same moment.

"Bless us! what's the matter?" exclaimed Lizzy; "I am sure I am grown quite nervous of late; everything terrifies me. I wish to goodness you wouldn't ——"

But Mr. Wilmington, who had risen hastily, had already left the room with Raimond.

"A messenger with a letter from Mr. Harry; from your son, sir; and desires it may be delivered to you when you are alone."

"My son! What the deuce can be the matter now? A

messenger? Nothing amiss with Mr. Harry, I hope. Candles in my room! Give me the letter."

And he walked into his own room, and sitting down by the table upon which the candles were placed, took the letter from the servant's hands, who immediately left the room.

"What, in the name of goodness, can keep you so long?" exclaimed Mrs. Wilmington, in her most acrid tone, vexed to have been kept so long waiting, and she dying with curiosity all the time to know what had happened.

"What, in the name of goodness——? Why, Mr. Wilmington, where are you?"

The window stood wide open, and the candles were flaring in their sockets, but there was no Mr. Wilmington.

Lizzy looked about: everything was as usual, except that the chair upon which he had evidently been sitting was thrown down. She stepped to the window, which opened to the ground. The branch of a fuchsia, which happened to have fallen across the path, was broken and trampled upon, as if some one had hastily rushed out that way.

She was rather a coward, and did not like to go even into her own garden alone at night; and there was something, she did not know what, that made her feel particularly nervous just then; so she only stood upon the threshold of the window, and looked out into the night to see if she could discover Mr. Wilmington; but nothing was to be seen, though the moonlight was so bright that it was almost as light as day. She listened, but she heard nothing; so, with a slight shiver, she came in again and shut-to the glass-door, and then returned to the drawing-room, thinking it probable her husband had come there by some other way.

But he had not returned. She waited, fretting and uncomfortable, for some little time longer; then she rang the bell, and asked Raimond whether he knew what was become of his master.

He knew nothing. Raimond had carried candles for him into his sitting-room; and he had gone there to read the letter.

"What letter?"

"Why, the letter, ma'am, the messenger brought. I thought you knew by this time, surely, ma'am."

"No, I know nothing, you tedious, tiresome old man! Tell

me all about it. Why did you call Mr. Wilmington out to give him a letter? You must be so full of your silly secrets, Raimond; but I'd have you to know your master has no secrets for me."

"It was put upon the letter, Mrs. Wilmington, that it was to be read alone; and I'm afraid there was bad news of some sort in it, for the man said he brought it from Newgate prison; and, as sure as I'm here, I think it was in Mr. Henry's hand. But *he* can't be in Newgate prison; *that* one is sure of."

"What can it all be about? Good gracious! I do wonder where your master is," cried Lizzy, starting up, more stimulated by curiosity than anxiety. Curiosity was the master-passion, if passion it may be called, of her mind. "I dare say he's up-stairs in his dressing-room."

"Shall I go and see?"

"No; I'll go myself," taking a candle.

But the dressing-room was empty: it was all arranged with its usual display; every trifle of show or necessity laid out, exactly in its place; no one seemed to have been there. They searched the house, and then they searched the garden. No trace, except that some part of a hedge which separated the grounds from Wimbledon Park seemed to have been newly broken through.

Raimond discovered, too, that his master's hat and gloves, which were usually placed in his sitting-room, were missing. They waited hour after hour, and still he did not return.

The first emotion of Mr. Wilmington, upon reading his son's generous letter, had been consistent with his character: it had been a paroxysm of selfish terror.

The danger of his unparalleled boy, the sense of his heroic piety and generosity, the remorse for his own wickedness and crime, were all lost, swallowed up, in the fear, the agonizing sense of alarm, which possessed him. Turning white as a sheet, his eyes staring, his hands clenched, twice he paced the room, perfectly bewildered with terror.

Fully aware of the fate to which he had exposed himself—a fate which had haunted him day and night since the deed was done—now the hideous gallows rose up, as it were, immediately before him, and an almost maddening impulse to secure his own safety at any cost possessed him.

He resolved to fly. No time was to be lost. He snatched up his hat, rushed out of the window, and did not stop till he reached the banks of the Thames.

Arrived there, he looked out for some waterman whom he might hail; but no one was to be seen: it was past midnight, and every one from the landing-place had gone home and to rest. He stood and looked upon the calm expanse of water before him, reflecting the silver light of the moon, which tinted the tops of some of the trees, and threw others into black, spectral shadows which seemed, to the terror of his guilty heart, to look like yawning graves. He looked around; he listened; all was perfectly still.

Strange fears—fears of he knew not what—an indescribable ecstasy of terror—then came over him. He paused a little, and then, impelled once more by the desire at any risk to fly, hurried forward, though still without success; not a boat could he see.

At length, exhausted by his rapid walk, and still more by the agony of his own thoughts, he found himself compelled to sit down and to take breath. And then, as often happens where the nerves have been extraordinarily excited, a sudden revulsion took place.

He felt himself extremely ill, and a kind of night-mare sensation came over him, as if he never should be able to accomplish his escape. He did not happen to know what boats were under orders for sailing the next morning, at what hour they started, or whither bound. He fancied himself waiting impatiently upon the platform, betrayed to the suspicion of every one who looked upon him; for his evil conscience painted himself as carrying his crime written upon his forehead. Then, suddenly it struck him that he was without money. A few sovereigns were all he had at that moment in his purse. How could he escape? How could he conceal himself without money? He had about one hundred pound in notes, lying, he knew, in his escrutoire. Oh that he had but recollected that fact in the paroxysm of his fear!

He must return and fetch the notes—that was absolutely necessary; and as he thought of this, and as his nervous tremor began to subside, and he was able to view his situation with some slight degree of calmness, he bethought himself of the strange appearance his flight must carry in the eyes of everybody. His son in such a situation—he just informed of it—it was sufficient to direct suspicion upon himself. Could any conduct be more mad? Then he trembled and shivered as he recollected that even flight did not posi-

tively ensure the safety of a criminal. He had heard of one government giving up great criminals to others.

There seemed no place on earth where he could shroud himself from the searching eyes of his fellow-men but America. Lost in those endless wilds, even to his terrified imagination it seemed as if justice would pursue him in vain; but then, how to get to America? He must have money.

Return he must; and if he returned, had he better persist in his endeavour to escape, or should he dare to remain where he was?

He took out his son's letter, and by the bright moonlight read it again.

He had hurried through it so hastily before, that indeed he might scarcely have been said to have read it at all. The first announcement that Selwyn's will had been discovered to be a forgery had driven all other considerations out of his head. He knew the truth; he knew too well the criminal; and crushing the letter into his pocket, in terror approaching to delirium, he had, as we have seen, started up and rushed headlong out of the window; but now, when he had read it through, a completely new order of ideas were awakened by it.

He began to see the whole in a different light: he began to surmise the generous purpose of his son; he was struck by his earnest entreaties to him to preserve his composure, by the precautions he evidently was taking that by no sudden and unexpected shock he should be overcome and exposed. He now saw clearly that his son was aware, as his conscience told how it was impossible but he should be aware, if the crime had been committed, who had committed it. His safest way was to return home; his son would have advised it; his son was aware of all the circumstances of the case; he had better return immediately; his absence might not even have been observed.

Still, I do not think all these reasonings would have given him courage enough to take this step, if it had not been for the absolute necessity of providing himself with money, and for the resolution he secretly formed to take care to do this to an extent which would enable him to accomplish his flight at any moment he might choose.

He read his son's letter a third time, and then the base selfishness of actual fear a little diminished. He read it, and anguish of another nature at last reached that contemptible heart.

He was escaping the danger himself; but how would it be with his son? I must own, in defence of his heartless in-

sensibility to Harry's position, that at the moment he really was not conscious of it: his whole mind was filled with the terrors which too surely awaited the real criminal. The dangers that surrounded the innocent, in the agonies of apprehension for himself, escaped him; but now, as he sat there, calmed, insensibly to himself, by the still influence of the hour, the liquid moonlight bathing the sleeping landscape —as he read that letter the third time—the words, "It is necessary that you should prepare yourself for the worst," took their true meaning. He had thought but of himself, applied them to himself. In his hurry of thought he had not given attention to the following lines: "Circumstances which I cannot explain have rendered it impossible for me to stand upon my defence, and I cannot disguise from myself what the result must in all probability be." Now their full meaning flashed upon his mind, and the paper fell from his hands.

The unhappy father—the wretched man at length felt like the father—like the man: a horror, an agony indescribable, took possession of him. He fell back upon the grass; his hat fell of; he clenched his hands; he rolled upon the earth in his agony, and groaned aloud.

Then he sat up, and cast a wild, despairing glance at the sky; at the calm, impenetrable mystery of the heavenly depths, which spoke no hope nor peace to him, but seemed, in their holy calmness, to reject him as the miserable outcast he felt himself to be. Then he gazed upon the cold, tranquil waters: they, too, seemed to mock his burning brain.

To plunge into those depths, and bury himself and his miserable history at once, might have suggested itself to many a man so overwrought as he was; but that was quite out of character with him: he was preserved from *that* temptation at least.

Stunned, confused, scarcely knowing what he did, at last he rose up; looked for his hat, put it mechanically upon his head, and then, with tottering steps, and as if led by some external impulse, some instinct quite independent of his will, he turned his steps homewards.

It was two o'clock before the wretched man arrived there, but he found the household still up; even the window by which he had gone out still open, and by that he entered; and, going up-stairs into his own dressing-room, had just sense and self-command enough to ring his bell, and, without opening his door, to tell Raimond that he was come in, and that everybody might go to bed.

And then he locked and double-locked his door, and passed a night amid tortures like those of hell.

Remorse was come at last.

The avenging Fury, with the whips of scorpions, had at last awakened; and the very weakness of the mind she visited gave fresh power to the cruel stings.

His boy! his son! his Harry!

Where was he? In a dark, loathsome dungeon—so imagination painted it—blasted as a felon; death staring him in the face; the hideous death of a public execution!

And it was he who had brought him to this!

His own, his only son!

Not led him to wrong, as the cause, the instigator, the tempter, as many wicked parents might have done; but he, the innocent, the honourable, the pure, was standing actually in his own guilty place!

He was about to be condemned, and to die for him! This angel of light—this admirable, this excellent, this incomparable young man—for him!—a poor, contemptible, erring, weak, worthless criminal!

For thus the avenging conscience painted the vain flatterer to himself now.

Oh, misery! misery! misery!

Never-dying worm; endless, excruciating misery; torturing thoughts; sleepless, never-changing, agonising, racking thoughts: such would his future be!

His son! No; he should not, he must not, he cannot, he shall not die!

Ah, weak wretch! never strengthened by one manly sacrifice, by one generous deed of self-immolation, by one sentiment of pure and noble self-devotion to the high, the generous, and the good! Where shall you find courage now? Where shall you find strength in this your hour of need?

Better die ten thousand deaths than endure the agonising consciousness which now tortures, and which must for ever torture you: that you have let the innocent die in your place, and that innocent one your own son: better a thousand times, even as a matter of mere, vile, selfish calculation!

But can you do it? Have you stamina, manliness, strength, virtue?

Oh, no! no!

Such things do not come to us just when we want them; they are not ready at our beck and call. The precious virtues, they are not to be had just because we wish to exercise them on an occasion so frightful as this. He who has despised or neglected all self-exercise in his day shall find his *self* betray him in the terrible hour; his *self* shall not answer

sensibility to Harry's position, that at the moment he really was not conscious of it: his whole mind was filled with the terrors which too surely awaited the real criminal. The dangers that surrounded the innocent, in the agonies of apprehension for himself, escaped him; but now, as he sat there, calmed, insensibly to himself, by the still influence of the hour, the liquid moonlight bathing the sleeping landscape —as he read that letter the third time—the words, "It is necessary that you should prepare yourself for the worst," took their true meaning. He had thought but of himself, applied them to himself. In his hurry of thought he had not given attention to the following lines: "Circumstances which I cannot explain have rendered it impossible for me to stand upon my defence, and I cannot disguise from myself what the result must in all probability be." Now their full meaning flashed upon his mind, and the paper fell from his hands.

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to the call; the vain idol he has made that self shall prove a tyrant too potent for his will.

The weak, enervated, miserable slave to self sank in the unequal struggle. Wretched, remorseful, torn with tortures indescribable he *could* be, and you may pity him; but just, courageous, bravely righteous in the face of personal danger, he could not be. No, not to save his only son.

And for this miserable being Harry Wilmington was now preparing himself seriously to die. For was it not his father?

Filial pity, like all the other gentle domestic virtues, was strong in his heart. It had blinded him to many of his father's faults; he had been ready to accept the faint seeming of what was good for a reality, so long as it had been possible; but, as life advanced, he could no longer continue thus altogether blinded. His esteem for his father might be said to have been long almost at an end; still he endeavoured to cherish in himself those pure feelings of reverence which seem instinctive to the good. The forms of outward respect were never violated; he never forgot he was his father.

And now one must die—that father or himself; one be betrayed—that father's crime, or himself lost. He could not contemplate the alternative: to shelter himself by exposing his father's guilt was impossible. He would make the best defence he could, subject to this condition; but he believed that it would be utterly inadequate: he must be condemned, and he must die.

He cast up his eyes to that Judge who knows the secrets of the heart, and offered Him the homage and submission of a spirit pure from this crime. He murmured not at the inexplicable decree by which he, the innocent, must suffer the penalties of the law; one thought alone it was that blanched his faded cheek and dimmed his eye: one *was* guilty, and it was his father.

The next morning was sweet even to him; sweet to them all.

Flavia and Caroline were at the gates of Newgate before

ten o'clock, and they sat there waiting in their hackney-coach for some time. Ever since they had arrived even so far, and were certain of being admitted, they had both seemed and felt better.

The gates at length opened; the coach rolled in, and they were within the drear precincts of a prison: that awful and mysterious abode of guilt and suffering which had seemed to them till now rather as a fabled tale than as an actual reality. But here they really were; and the one nearest and dearest of all earthly things was a prisoner within these walls.

They got out of the coach, they knew not how, and, arm clasped in arm, followed the turnkey, who, with his huge bunch of keys dangling from his hand, went forward before them, in a careless, indifferent way, lounging from side to side, and swinging the jangling keys heedlessly as he went. The key is applied to the lock; a grating sound, and the heavy nailed door opens to admit them.

Henry was sitting, his head leaning upon his hand, his elbow resting upon the table, in deep thought. His face was deadly pale: it is the native hue of the prison-house; and his form seemed, even thus early, bowed and bent down with suffering. He had lost the erect bearing of the free and undaunted man. How should one accused, imprisoned, and about to be convicted of a deadly crime, maintain it? But the sleep of innocence had visited his pillow that night, and he felt calm and composed; and there was a sweet serenity upon that serious face, and a something—a brightness—a sort of forecast of the heaven to which he belonged.

Both of the young women paused simultaneously upon the threshold, for he had not even lifted his head. When the door opened, they gazed upon him for a moment with reverence; then the tongue of the young wife was loosened as if by a charm, and calling out, "Henry!" she fell upon his bosom. There is something in hearty, honest tears; there is something in the strong embrace of sorrow—a something to which all that prosperity can bestow is faint; and so they both felt as they strained themselves convulsively to each other, and mingled their tears.

Weeping in his arms, he clasped his little, loving, devoted wife, and tears streamed from his eyes over her innocent head. He looked into his sister's calm, majestic eyes, and felt that all was right there, too, and was comforted. In their strong affection, in their unquestioning confidence in his integrity, he felt as if he heard the sentence which one day or other would be finally pronounced upon him. The rest was an affair of time.

Caroline stood by, the tears moistening her large dark eyes, and felt they were comforted. As for her, she was supported by her deep, enthusiastic sense of her brother's goodness and innocence. The sense of the sublime is an elevating and inspiring feeling: his heroism seemed to inspire her, and to elevate her above ordinary sorrow.

I do not know exactly why it was, or how it was, that without the smallest communication upon the subject with her brother, unless the slight exchange of looks after their eyes fell together upon the paper he had destroyed two days ago might be called such, she seemed to have exactly divined the position in which he stood.

The tears Flavia shed relieved her from all those dreadful nervous sensations against which she had so vainly struggled; and it was a beautiful thing to see how, immediately upon being set at liberty from those distressing fetters of the will, her mind and her heart responded to the call.

The first, the only thought in her mind was for her husband; she never cast one even upon her own heavy sorrow. How to assist, support, and comfort him, and how to show her gratitude for Caroline's kindness, were her only thoughts. So, after she had wept her fill, she gently disengaged herself from his arms, kissed him, went up to Caroline, kissed her tenderly, and whispering, "You shall have no more trouble with me now, Caroline," drew a chair close to her husband, locked her arm in his, and began to talk of what they could do to make him more comfortable.

"Your presence, my sweetest love, is enough for that," he said, bending down again and kissing her fair hair; "if you can but preserve this sweet serenity; if you can be but composed and resigned, my own darling, all the rest will be easy to endure. This is a great trial for you both, my dear girls—a hard trial for us all; but the only way to soften these cruel hours is to resign ourselves and everything at once into the hands of God; to submit calmly to His holy will, and bless Him for the alleviation He has given to the evil that has befallen us in our prosperity, in our being thus allowed to be together."

"Caroline! sister!" holding out his hand to her, whilst his other was clasped round the waist of Flavia, whose head rested upon his shoulder; "our firm, and constant, and best friend! I never knew the full value of such a treasure before, though I have not been ungrateful for it;" and he looked at the calm, serious face of his sister, sought her eye, and glanced at his sweet wife, as much as to say, "I shall leave her to you."

They sat together several hours, till Henry became uneasy at not having heard from his father, and impatient for Mr. Kingston's arrival. From them he expected to gain intelligence.

About two o'clock Mr. Kingston arrived. He came in as they were still sitting together.

A slight exclamation, "Oh!" and hesitation about entering.

"Come in, my good friend," said Henry, rising cheerfully; "we are not very well supplied with chairs here, but there is a seat for you. My wife, my sister; Mr. Kingston, and my own and my father's very old and valued friend."

The old man looked first at one young lady, then at the other; they held out their hands; he took each in silence, then sat down, and endeavoured to clear his throat. His hands shook; he was much agitated.

"You may venture to talk about business, Mr. Kingston, before these young ladies. We are more happy together than separate. There is a little wife, and here is a dear sister; each of them able and willing to assist me in my defence, were it necessary. I shall behave better than I did yesterday."

"I don't doubt it—I dare say," was all Mr. Kingston could articulate.

"But we have been anxiously expecting you," said Henry. "You promised yesterday you would visit my father. I wrote to him last night. Have you seen him?"

"Yes," said Mr. Kingston; "I have seen him. Don't let me distress you, my dear young friends: the shock has been too much for him; he is very ill."

Caroline and Henry glanced at one another; and Caroline said, "Tell us all, Mr. Kingston, if you please. How did you find him? Let us hear the worst."

"You cannot be surprised. Your father has his faults, but he loves his children."

Caroline looked down, Henry looked up: something comforting was at his poor heart.

Mr. Kingston went on:—

"I found him in bed, for indeed he is quite unable to rise; he has had a sort of fit—something of that sort, I believe; but, pray, don't be frightened. He has been bled, and is pronounced, I believe, almost out of danger."

Strange expressions had fluttered over Caroline's face during this speech. At its conclusion she sighed, and then started, and checked herself with a sort of shuddering at her own sigh.

"Pray go on," said Henry.

"The anguish of his mind," continued Mr. Kingston, now seating himself, "at the receipt of Mr. Henry's letter, drove him at first, I believe, almost distracted. It appears that he rushed out of the house into the fields, and could not be found, although they searched everywhere. In about two hours, however, he must have returned of his own accord, for his dressing-room bell was heard to ring; but when his man went up, the door was locked, and he did not open it. He told the servant to request Mrs. Wilmington to go to bed, and ordered him to shut up the house, and send every one to rest. He did not go to bed himself that night. Early in the morning his bell was heard ringing again; and when Raimond came to him he complained of feeling very strangely, and looked more like one dead than alive, the man said. He ran to fetch his mistress, and a doctor was sent for. He was perfectly sensible then, it seemed, but appeared very weak; but the doctor said he must be immediately bled, nevertheless. They had great difficulty in persuading him to submit to this, and still more in persuading him to go to bed, but at last they succeeded, and there I found him.

"Excuse me, Mr. Henry Wilmington: I thought I knew your father. I had done him injustice, I own: I had not imagined that he possessed so much sensibility. No father, not the tenderest, I am convinced, could have suffered more upon this occasion than he has done, and still does. The doctor says it will kill him; but I think not. Console yourself, Miss Wilmington: I think not. I have seen him. It is my firm persuasion that he will live."

She had risen from her chair whilst he was talking. It seemed as if she could not sit still. Her agitation was excessive. She strove to master it: she could not. Now a gleam of hope, yet with a strange mixture of horror in it, was seen in her eyes, followed by a shuddering, and trembling, and wringing of the hands. Caroline had never been seen in such a state before.

Henry, on the contrary, preserved his composure: he seemed deeply interested in what Mr. Kingston was saying, but not in the least degree agitated like his sister.

After one or two turns up and down the room, her hands still clasped and wrung before her, with a face black with repressed emotion, she at last came up and said to Mr. Kingston—

"Did you see my father yourself? and what——? Did anything—anything pass?"

For the first time Henry looked up at her, and there was reproach in his glance.

Mr. Kingston seemed a little surprised, and said—

"No; nothing particular passed. He seemed, indeed, so very ill that he could not have listened to, even if he had been capable of bearing, the only subject we could either of us at that time have entered upon. I began by telling him I came from his son; to which he made no answer but by shutting his eyes, drawing the cover over his face, and I thought I heard him sobbing. I hastened to tell him that you were well and composed, and that I hoped; but as I said the word, he started up, threw off the covering from his face, and looked at me in such an ecstasy of joy ——"

Mr. Kingston's voice trembled a little; he stopped a moment, and then he said, looking seriously at Henry, "But I thought it my duty to add, that unless you adopted the line of defence I advocated, and against which you seemed to have taken up what was to me the most inexplicable prejudice, I could not answer for the consequences; adding, that I trusted he would use all his influence to advise you to it. And upon this he uttered a low groan, and sank down in his bed again. Indeed, Mr. Henry, what I took the liberty of urging last night would have double force with you, if you could see the state your father is in."

Henry made no reply: he pressed his wife more closely and tenderly. At this appeal she cast up her eyes to his with the expression of a holy angel, as he thought; but she only trembled a little, and uttered not a word. Caroline rose and placed herself at the back of Henry's chair.

Then he said, "I assure you, Mr. Kingston, I see, as plainly as you do, the duty of defending myself by every means in my power; and I own it seems to me as if the defence I have to offer ought to be sufficient to satisfy any body of men: my character, my simple denial of any knowledge whatsoever of that paper, and the fact of my *not* having communicated the intelligence of his uncle's death to my poor friend. Further than this it would be useless for me to attempt to go, for I have no one to corroborate me. As to declaring the time I passed in Selwyn's house, or how I disposed of myself whilst there ——"

"And did no one else but yourself enter the house that morning that you know of? That is to me the inconceivable part of the business. Some one must have been there during your stay, because the circumstance of the blank unequivocally fixes the time to that very portion of the day. Have you here none of the servants? Somebody must have been in that room; must have been there long enough to have prepared that paper. One of the servants is, I under-

stand, subpœna'd as evidence for the prosecution; but the other—for there was another—where is she? What has become of her?"

Harry was silent: the remark seemed to strike him.

"Where is she?"

"I do not know."

"But she must be searched out; her evidence must be closely sifted. Where was she all that morning? Why is she not produceable? What is become of her? I will instantly set on foot an inquiry; I will sift this matter out. When was she last heard of? Oh, yes; I see: her fellow-servant will certainly know something about her; where she went, at least, when they were discharged."

Caroline began to change colour rapidly, Flavia to tremble with impatience, as Mr. Kingston was speaking; but Henry interrupted him.

"No," said he, "I would rather you would not search out that woman."

Caroline clasped her hands; Flavia turned suddenly round, and hid her face against her husband's shoulder. Again he gently pressed her in his arms, and bending down, kissed her hair once more, and whispered—

"My angel! my patient, my noble, generous angel! support and solace of your poor husband's heart!"

But Mr. Kingston again looked very serious, nay, displeased.

"It is not merely that this woman's evidence might turn the scale in your favour, but that, if we neglect to search her out, it may make against us."

"I don't see that," said Henry, calmly. "Why do not the parties for the prosecution bring her forward? They lay themselves open to the same imputation."

"I fear they do not; they have already brought forward one servant."

CHAPTER XVI.

How they all supported themselves during the ensuing three weeks it is hard to tell. How they could support themselves in this almost unheard-of situation would be almost inexplicable to those who have not experienced that faith which can move mountains; that strength which is derived from the moral powers rightly directed, and supported by an intimate, vivid conviction of the existence and the never-sleeping providence of Him who made this mysterious scheme of things, and who remembers mercy in judgment. As the days passed by, far from losing, these three excellent beings seemed to derive fresh courage from their mutual affection; from a faith not the mere offspring of the present calamity, but the result of right and serious exercises of the heart and mind in the day when the sky was serene and the sunshine bright. Such faith abides the fiery trial. It is not the hasty flame of straw and stubble: it strengthens, it gathers round the heart; a shield which quenches the fiery darts of evil.

Their minds—firm through resignation, composed by submission, animated by hopes which the world can neither give nor take away—they not only found consolation; they were able even to enjoy the sweets of their mutual affection: yes, even to find a sweetness in it, as I said before, which during all the hours of their happiness they had not known.

Mr. Wilmington continued miserably ill. His sufferings were dreadful: they were, of course, all attributed to his excessive love for his son, for which his friends never before had given him credit. They acknowledged this, and pitied him the more.

As for Mr. Craiglethorpe, he continued implacable. He pressed forward the prosecution with more zeal and exultation in consequence of Henry's letter, which he regarded as almost an acknowledgment of guilt, whilst he felt offended by what he thought an attempt to impose upon him. The actual sufferings of the victims of his revengeful feelings troubled him not, for they were not brought before his eye. Men

would not be so hard-hearted as they are if they would but take the trouble to inquire what others endure. It would have been impossible for Mr. Craiglethorpe to have maintained those barbarous feelings of exultation and triumph over the father if he had known what he was thus trampling under his feet.

As it was, he went on during these three weeks visiting his old friends, renewing old acquaintances, dining out, eating good things, and drinking good wines, calling from time to time upon the solicitor for the prosecution to learn how things were going on; rejoicing in the certainty of success, and never suffering himself to suspect for a single moment that the man he was pursuing so unmercifully might be innocent.

There was certainly one excuse for this: every circumstance strengthened the conviction that the will was unquestionably forged.

This one, in agonies of horror too great for description, in alternations of terror that made his blood chill and his face become blue, as if in cholera; all the wretchedness of the miserable coward who knows what he ought to do, and dare not for his life do it. Another, in hardening his heart in pride, revenge, and hatred. The rest, in the experience of all that love, and goodness, and pious resignation can do to extract the sting from death. So passed the time. The day at last arrived when the trial was to take place.

Henry had prepared himself early; and, dressed in a plain suit of black, with his white waistcoat and his white neckcloth, looked prepared for some important scene of life. His hair had been carefully arranged by his wife and sister, and had resumed its glossy wave; and, his hat and gloves placed by his side upon the table, he awaited the summons to the bar of the Old Bailey.

He looked grave, but perfectly composed; and so did his wife and sister. There was no call upon his strength and fortitude there. All understood perfectly the situation in which they were; each had tacitly submitted to it. The horror of accusing their own father, of bringing a parent to punishment and death, had been equally felt by all three. I believe it will also be felt by all who read this story.

The thing is strange—some may think it unnatural, *I* do not—but these two women both agreed in the desire to be

present at the trial. To me it seems natural that, resigned as they were to the worst, utterly without hope of everything but a condemnation, under a chain of circumstantial evidence apparently so unbroken, they should desire to accompany to the last, through every scene of this disastrous affair, the man whom they loved with such intensity. They certainly did desire it, and, through the care of Mr. Kingston, were provided with places in the court, as private as he could contrive for them, and commanding a view of the bar, at which their husband and brother was shortly to appear; Mr. Kingston accompanying him there. They had both dressed themselves in black, and long and thick black veils hung over their faces, and they had taken the greatest care to conceal their intention from Henry, fearing that their presence might disturb and overwhelm him.

So there they were placed, before the crowding and bustling incident to a filling court began.

It was the first trial at which either of them had ever been present.

They watched the judge in his scarlet robes taking his seat upon the bench: it was, I believe, Dampierre. Never man arrayed as criminal judge presented a more venerable aspect: his long but beautiful features, his fine eye, his pale skin—not pale with the paleness of sickness, but with that of feeling; his whole aspect so dignified, yet so calm, so composed, so just, so kind—struck me, when I once saw him presiding, as the finest example of what a judge should *appear;* at least, that could be imagined.

There was a comfort to the accused even to look upon that countenance: he must have felt he should have justice done him—justice tempered with mercy.

Then the lawyers began to gather round the table, all looking more than usually interested, and with something less than usual of their disposition to make mirth of everything; for young Wilmington was known personally to some in a slight degree, and by reputation to most. He was a young man like themselves: it was truly a dreadful strait to stand in.

By-and-by, Messrs. Jones and Estcourt might have been seen coming in and taking their seats, as nearly opposite to the bar as they could; and last crept in an old, thin, withered man, dressed in a suit of brown, with brown eye, sharp as that of the falcon, and a countenance sagacious, severe, determined, which no one could overlook, and took his place behind the two before-mentioned gentlemen, and fixed his eyes with a look of earnest expectation upon the bar.

The usual ceremonies were gone through, and the prisoner was ordered to appear.

Steps were heard ascending the stairs which led from the place where the prisoners were kept until summoned to trial, and Harry Wilmington appeared. He had never, as you well know, been gifted with any particular advantages of appearance, and was far from having any personal beauty to boast of; but, as I sat in the court that day, interested, deeply interested, in the event as I was, I could not help remarking the wonderful, the almost all-powerful effect of mind over matter in the human countenance. He looked fair and pale, and the delicacy of his complexion was set off by the shades of his dark-brown hair, which fell in rich masses around his face; his eye was serious and melancholy, darkened, as it were, by the cloud of sorrow, yet composed, steady, calm; there was a sweetness indescribable in the expression of the whole face, but the softness of patience was elevated by an air of firm and unaffected dignity.

The consciousness of innocence was never written in more unquestionable characters upon any countenance. His black dress, his white waistcoat and neckcloth, gave an elegance—a full-dress character, if I may say so—to his appearance, which suited well with the solemnity of the occasion.

I watched Mr. Craiglethorpe, for I already knew the outline of the story. I saw him bend eagerly forward, as the accused was heard ascending the steps behind the bar, fix his eyes upon him intently, as soon as he appeared; and then he began, as I thought, to grow a little pale, then paler and paler, the longer and the more intently he looked; and then his hand, which rested upon a gold-headed cane, slightly—very slightly—began to tremble. The sarcastic, malignant expression which had made his presence absolutely hateful to me, began to be exchanged for a look of amazement, almost doubt, hesitation. He looked at the prisoner; he looked down; paler and paler he grew; but, except the slight trembling of the hand, his emotions, whatever they might be, were only evidenced upon his countenance, and nobody seemed to observe him but myself. He sat a good deal obscured by his two friends, and the attention of every one was riveted upon the prisoner.

The arraignment began, bearing that he who stood indicted by the name of Henry Wilmington, of Lostwithiel, in the county of Montgomeryshire, Esquire, did, on or after the 26th of August, 18—, in the —— year of his Majesty's reign, with force and arms, in the parish of St. James's London, feloniously and falsely make, forge, and counterfeit, and

cause and procure to be falsely made, forged, and counterfeited, and willingly act and assist in the false making, forging, and counterfeiting, a certain will and testament, purporting to be the last will and testament of Charles Selwyn, the tenor of which will and testament was as follows: that was to say ——

And here the short paper, purporting to be the last will of poor Selwyn, was put in and read. It consisted of a few lines, all written, as it would appear, in the testator's own hand, and was signed by him. The countenance of the prisoner changed, and his eye was observed to drop as this paper was produced and read; then he leaned his elbow upon the bar, and covered his face with his hand, and so continued till the reading was over.

The voice of the clerk of arraigns was heard.

"How say you, Henry Wilmington? are you guilty of the felony whereof you stand indicted, or are you not guilty?"

And then, distinctly, clearly, unhesitatingly, the accent of truth itself, the reply was made—

"Not guilty."

"Prisoner, how will you be tried?"

The same clear, distinct, firm voice sounded through the court, the crowd in which listened in breathless silence—

"By God and by my country."

The counsel for the prosecution then rose and opened the case. I shall not follow that gentleman in his oratory, but briefly relate to you the order and manner in which the facts were brought forward.

He stated that the late Mr. Selwyn had made a will, about half-a-year before the day of his death, in which he had left the bulk of his property to his uncle, Miles Craiglethorpe, Esq. with the exception of legacies to his servants and friends, the only considerable bequest being one of ten thousand pounds, as a proof of his friendship to Henry Wilmington, Esq. son of Mr. Wilmington, of Belgrave Square, and of the Beeches, Wimbledon. "This will," he added, "is not now in existence; it has been destroyed, but its provisions can be sworn to by my friend, Mr. Mason, the confidential solicitor of the deceased, who had been employed by him to draw up every paper of importance, without exception, that it had ever been necessary to execute, and had at various times been consulted upon and made alterations in this will, there appearing not one single instance in which that gentleman had ever attempted to draw up any testamentary paper whatever without his assistance."

Mr. Craiglethorpe, I could fancy, had, even before the

lawyer had proceeded thus far, become more composed: he ceased to look at Henry, and kept his eyes fixed upon the counsel for the prosecution.

The sudden conviction of his innocence which, at the first appearance of the young man had flashed across his mind, was, I imagined, gradually giving way before the details of the accusation as the orator proceeded, who then went on to state, "that upon the morning of the 26th of August, 18—, the loss of the 'Sumatra,' in which, by intelligence overland, it was known Mr. Craiglethorpe had taken his passage, was published in London, with the addition that every soul on board had perished, except the mate and one sailor, who had escaped in the long-boat, and alone survived of all who had in that manner endeavoured to escape. The details of this melancholy shipwreck it was not to his purpose to enumerate: suffice it to say, the news of the disaster reached London on that day. The paper, as he had evidence to prove, was read by the two Messrs. Wilmington together at breakfast; soon after which Mr. Henry Wilmington, having prearranged to leave town that evening, upon a matter connected with business in Cornwall, started with the intention of calling upon his friend on his way, and breaking the intelligence to him as best he could before his departure.

"Accordingly, he arrived at Mr. Selwyn's door about half-past eleven o'clock, and was admitted by the house-maid, who told him that the man-servant Charles was engaged with his master, who had just had a most alarming attack, but was now recovering and better.

"Mr. Henry Wilmington ascended the stairs and went up to his friend's room, where he found Mr. Selwyn rallying from his attack, but extremely weak and exhausted. He was holding a paper in his hand, about which he appeared very anxious, and desirous that his servant should immediately carry it to some house in the city, and wait there till the business connected with it was arranged. My witness as to these facts, not being particularly well acquainted with business, cannot enlighten us as to the subject-matter or bearing of this paper; but that is entirely irrelevant to my case: all that it is necessary to acquaint you with is, that Mr. Selwyn was anxious Charles should go into the city directly, and that the man-servant was unwilling to leave him in his present state.

"This difficulty was, however, set at rest by Mr. Henry Wilmington, in a somewhat officious manner, pressing his departure upon Charles, promising to stay with his master in his place until his return, or at least until he should be abso-

lutely obliged to depart by the Falmouth coach. Now, gentlemen, before I proceed further, I must call your attention to a slight but most important circumstance connected with the paper in question.

"The man-servant Charles had that morning received from Mr. Selwyn the keys of a certain drawer in a bureau, standing in the dining-room, a room where Mr. Selwyn usually received his morning visitors, with directions to open it, search for the very paper in question, and bring it up to him. In obedience to these orders, Charles goes down, opens the drawer, but not finding the paper he is sent in search of, immediately turns over several, among which he is prepared to swear he noticed the will dated as the one sworn to by Mr. Mason. Just as he had at last found it, he heard his master's bell ring violently; he snatched up the paper and endeavoured to push to the drawer, which sticking a little, at a fresh and more violent pull from the bell he hurried away, leaving the drawer half-open and the keys hanging in the lock.

"The next circumstance to which I will call your attention is the departure of Charles. He went down stairs, Mr. Henry Wilmington following him, making inquiries about the patient; such inquiries as friends usually wish to make in the absence of the invalid; and this conversation continued till they got into the hall, and were at the dining-room door, then ajar, where they stood some little time talking, and then Charles went out, shutting the hall-door after him, and leaving Mr. Henry Wilmington, as he is ready to swear, standing at the dining-room door, looking very much agitated and affected by what he had heard.

"And here, gentlemen, we leave Mr. Henry Wilmington in full possession of the house, with the exception of the women-servants, one of whom is not forthcoming, but the other is; and it was her business to open the door in the absence of Charles; and she is ready to swear that there was neither knock nor ring at the bell during the whole of that morning, and that she never let any one into the house during the whole of the period which elapsed between the departure of Charles and his return, except the butcher's and baker's boys, admitted through the area-gate, she following them out and locking the gate after them, and being positive they neither of them ever that day set foot upon the kitchen-stairs.

"How long Mr. Henry Wilmington remained in the house, what he did with himself, or how he disposed of his time, is a matter he alone can account for. The chain of my evidence is taken up late in the evening, when Charles returned,

found Mr. Wilmington gone, his master in a comfortable sleep; and then, suddenly recollecting the keys, and that the drawer was open, he went down to fetch those keys, found the drawer shut and locked, and the keys lying upon the table.

"That drawer, gentlemen, was never again opened until after Mr. Selwyn's death, when the paper Charles saw was gone, and a new will is substituted for the one he will swear was deposited there.

"As Charles, by his master's request, put the keys into his pocket, and kept them there until, after his death, they were demanded from him, it must have been during this interval of time that the exchange was effected. I leave you to draw your own conclusions."

Counsel then went on to state what you already know of the preamble of the will: of Mr. Selwyn's having died in ignorance of the death of his uncle, but of the damning fact that Mr. Henry Wilmington had left a letter announcing this event to him, enclosed in another to Charles, desiring him to give his master the note without fail the next morning, as soon as he awoke, lest, he said, he should be taken by surprise. This order had been given in the most positive terms.

"And now, gentlemen of the jury," continued the counsel for the prosecution, "as if the confession of guilt upon the part of the prisoner himself were alone wanting to complete the evidence against him, I have to lay before you a letter written, in the first terror of arrest, to this Mr. Craiglethorpe, the prosecutor, offering the most unlimited surrender of all the property thus feloniously obtained, upon condition of the prosecution being withdrawn. That the sense of equity and justice which this young gentleman thought proper at that moment, and for the first time, to discover in himself, was not very genuine, may be inferred from the circumstance that Mr. Craiglethorpe had been six months in England, and suffering all the privations of a man doubly robbed of his all by these Wilmingtons, and not the slightest offer of compromise, far less unconditional renunciation, had been tendered till the crime was discovered, and the accusation brought home to him."

The prisoner started as this subject was entered upon, and an expression of acute pain passed over his face; but it was transient, and he composed himself once more to the attitude of deep attention which he had maintained from the time the trial had really begun.

Mr. Craiglethorpe, evidently relieved by this statement of

his case, though he had doubtless heard it all before, drew his breath as one does when relieved from a heavy anxiety, and again ventured to lift up his face to the bar.

There stood the accused—paler certainly, there was no denying that, but with the same air of serene and unaffected dignity.

He appeared perfectly prepared for the statement which would be made, and it excited no emotion: he stood there self-collected and calm.

And then, again, a wistful, doubtful expression, succeeded by a sharp expression of pain, would appear upon Craiglethorpe's anxious face; and he now turned his eyes away, and directed the whole of his attention to the continuance of the trial.

The witnesses were called. First appeared Charles, an old, withered, gray-haired, but most respectable-looking serving-man, who testified to all the facts mentioned by the counsel for the prosecution, and stood the ordeal of a cross-examination in a manner that proved to the satisfaction of every one that he was only testifying to what he knew to be the truth.

He was followed by the young woman who officiated as under-servant in Selwyn's house, and had to attend the door when the man-servant was out.

She most positively and unequivocally deposed to her not having opened the hall-door during the whole time of Charles's absence upon the 26th, and to her certainty that no one but Mr. Henry Wilmington had been admitted into the house that morning, with the exception of the two boys from the butcher and baker, who came down the area steps, only entered the kitchen, and were by her re-conducted to the areagate, which she locked after them.

No one else, she swore positively, had been in the house but herself, Mrs. Simcoe, the housekeeper, and Mr. Henry Wilmington.

But Mrs. Simcoe did not appear, neither for the prosecution nor for the defence.

That she, however, could not have been guilty of the forgery was proved in two ways: first, that she could scarcely write at all, and it would have been utterly impossible for her to have executed a forgery with the neatness and correctness of the one before the court; and secondly, that she had been sitting at work in her own room that morning, had not heard of the reported death of Mr. Craiglethorpe, and did not do so, as it happened, until the evening of that day, after the keys had been returned to Charles.

Here the case for the prosecution closed.

The court and the spectators in breathless anxiety awaited the defence.

The leading counsel rose; but his defence was rather ingenious than satisfactory. It amounted only to a long dissertation upon the unsatisfactory nature of constructive evidence in general; upon the high character of the prisoner; and at this portion of his harangue, the young man who spoke became warm, animated, eloquent. He described the unblemished life, the unquestioned integrity, the high place the accused held in the eyes of every living creature with whom he was acquainted; and warned the prosecutor and the jury, in terms the most earnest and pathetic, to take care what they were about, for that most assuredly a verdict in condemnation would work the ruin of an innocent man.

With respect to the letter, I must not forget to say that he positively affirmed that the accused, strange as it might seem, had never received the slightest intimation of Mr. Craiglethorpe's return till the night of his arrest. But singular to say, however, he provided no witnesses to confirm this fact. Henry would allow none to be called. There were only three people living who could give positive evidence upon this point: his father, his wife, and his sister.

His father was lying upon a bed of agony, quite incapable of appearing in a court of justice; and Harry shrank from exposing his wife or his sister to the agony of a cross-examination under such circumstances.

There had been reason, too, to hope that the letter would not be put in. This, and the conscious terror of discovery, which paralyzed every effort made by his legal advisers in his defence, had decided him to be passive under this accusation; and the counsel for the prosecution found little difficulty in replying to such a defence. He pointed out how weak must be the reliance upon facts, when the oratory of his honourable friend was chiefly applied to dissuading the jury from relying upon facts. He affirmed, in opposition to the affirmation of the counsel for the prisoner, that a more perfect chain of constructive evidence never was, never could be, presented against any man, inasmuch as it proved to demonstration that the paper must have been forged by some one in possession of the fact of Mr. Craiglethorpe's death, during a certain space of time, in which space of time it was demonstrably impossible any living creature but the accused could have accomplished the deed.

"If the evidence in this case do not amount to conviction,

we may henceforth and for ever have done with circumstantial evidence in any possible case," concluded he. "No defence can avail the prisoner, unless he can give proof that some other person, capable of this delicate imitation of another's hand, was in the house during the time the witnesses deposed he was alone, or at least can account for his own time, and show that he was *not* in the dining-room during that period; at all events, for a sufficient length of time to have accomplished a work which must at least have employed a couple of hours. Neither of these things he has made even the slightest attempt to do; and why? Evidently because he cannot do it; he cannot attempt it; he knows he cannot, without furnishing arms to the prosecution: because, gentlemen, to enter into details in the attempt to disguise or conceal a fact, inevitably and invariably lends means for the discovery and demonstration of the truth of that fact.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I leave the case in your hands, without the shadow of a doubt as to the result."

The judge was beginning his charge, when a bustle was heard in a remote corner of the court.

A young lady had fainted and must be carried out. A gentleman was seen bearing her in his arms: she was dressed in deep mourning, and followed by another lady dressed in a similar manner.

The prisoner did not even turn his eyes that way; they were fixed upon the judge, as were the falcon eyes of Mr. Craiglethorpe, with a gravity—a solemn, deep gravity—which was, indeed, a remarkable change from the expression of face with which he had entered the court.

The judge, in a voice which he seemed to find it difficult to compose to the calm dignity and authority of the office and the occasion, was commencing his address when there was a fresh interruption.

Suddenly, as if impelled by an impulsive feeling, Mr. Craiglethorpe rose, and, addressing the judge, said—

"My lord, one moment; may I be allowed to speak? I do *not* believe the prisoner at the bar to be guilty."

There was a general sensation throughout the court.

"What has that gentleman to say?" said the judge with gravity; "and who is he? If he had anything to allege in favour of the defence; if he could merely speak to character even, why was not he put into the witness-box?"

The agitation of Mr. Craiglethorpe seemed increasing.

"Let me speak now!" said he.

"Have you any past circumstances to bring forward? This is certainly irregular; yet, rather than that the prisoner

should not have the benefit of every possible circumstance in his favour, let this gentleman be put into the witness-box and examined."

"It is unnecessary to do that," said Mr. Craiglethorpe, his agitation subsiding, and a kind of gloomy embarrassment coming over him, as he thus suddenly found himself the mark upon which all the eyes of the court were fixed. "I have been wrong; I know some of the circumstances. All I can say is, I came into this court as the prosecutor of that young man: I leave it with the deepest conviction that he is innocent. Gentlemen of the jury, listen to me, and for the love of God believe me!"

This was said in an agony of earnestness, as, rising from his seat, and apparently incapable of longer enduring the scene before him, he rose and left the court.

Every one was moved; every one beheld in the sort of instinctive conviction of the prosecutor a confirmation of his own.

People whispered; hope again brightened the countenances of the compassionate spectators; and all eyes were directed to the judge.

They looked for a favourable charge; the conviction of innocence had found a responsive feeling in every heart, which they expected to find expressed in the charge. But no: the evidence was too strong. The grave and conscientious judge sat there, not to be influenced by enthusiasm, imagination, or feeling, but to sift and decide upon the evidence of truth.

However reluctant, however deeply reluctant, it was impossible to resist the evidence. It amounted, as far as circumstantial evidence ever can amount, to absolute demonstration. There was not even a bare hypothesis offered by the defence to account for the undeniable fact; there could not be a doubt as to the guilt of the accused; his own denial and the high character he had hitherto held were the only answer to this damning array of facts.

The summing up was patient, merciful, but against the prisoner. The jury retired for a few moments, and returned with a verdict of *Guilty!*

There was a burst of sorrow from all present. The judge, his deep feeling written in his face, but with a grave, authoritative voice, commanded "Silence in the court!" and then, after a pause, during which it was evident he was endeavouring to master his voice, addressed the prisoner.

A few pathetic words upon the painful sight of one bearing so high a character for rectitude, conscientiousness, and

disinterestedness, having forfeited it under the sudden temptation of a moment; a few brief words upon the vice of covetousness and an undue desire for money; and the heavy sentence of the law was pronounced, in a voice which, in spite of all his efforts, was heard to falter.

The prisoner, who had preserved an attitude of calm but deeply serious attention during the whole of the trial—except that a flash of sudden joy had brightened his face at the interruption of Mr. Craiglethorpe—made a grave bow as the sentence was concluded, and, turning calmly to the jailer, was conducted out of court.

CHAPTER XVII.

The old man had hurried out of the court, but he could not go home; he could not bear to leave the precincts of the Old Bailey till he had learned the final sentence. He waited there in the outer hall, half-hidden behind one of the pillars, waiting in speechless distress for news. There was a buzz of voices; he pressed forward; people were coming out of court; they were talking in much agitation; he listened as if his life lay in the next sentence.

"Poor fellow! Guilty! Found guilty!" struck upon his ear.

At that moment a hackney-coach drew up to the door, and from an inner room a gentleman with two ladies came forth, dressed in deep mourning. One—a young and beautiful creature, quite a girl; so fair and fragile! her bonnet off, her long hair falling over his arm—was carried by the gentleman, to all appearance dead, but with a look of woe upon her pallid face that haunted his pillow for years; the other, tall and majestic, followed. She happened to turn her eye full upon him as he passed. The deepest melancholy, the profound, death-like calm of despair, was within in it. It was the beautiful, appalling countenance of the Medusa; and he felt as if he were turned to stone.

"His young wife and his sister!" he heard somebody muttering near him.

He could bear it no longer, but rushed forth into the street. Yes, he had gained his object: he was revenged; his malignant passions were all gratified. Yes, yes! justice had overtaken the criminal. Oh, yes! he was revenged!

Oh, justice! justice! Oh, vengeance! vengeance!

Yes, the justice and the vengeance divine had fastened upon one great and real criminal: the man who had rejoiced in another's fall.

"Because thou saidst Aha! against my sanctuary when it was profaned. Aha! she is broken that was the gates of my people. Thus saith the Lord God: Howl ye! Woe worth the day!"

He hurried along the streets, driven as by the whips of the Furies; the cruel Furies, that lie sleeping till the deed is

done, and then start up and raise the quivering lash of serpents, and follow, like the wretched Orestes, the man far more guilty. He shed a mother's blood for justice—cruelly, unnaturally. But who is so cruel, who so unnatural, as the man who triumphs and rejoices in another's detection in crime?

Conscience—the recollection of all his iniquitous triumph—his barbarous satisfaction—his exultation in the detection, the pursuit, and the arrest of the man he hated for his father's sake, but still more for his own—conscience awoke, and presented her terrible visions to his mind.

That young man, standing there at the bar, at his arraignment wearing in his every look the unquestionable, the undoubted stamp of innocence—innocence of which a strong, intuitive impression upon his own mind, every time he looked, acquired fresh force. He shut his eyes; he could not shut it out; and then passed by that lovely pale girl, insensible, but with such a face of woe; and then the dark, gloomy despair written in that beautiful Medusa face of the sister, as it turned full upon him.

He ran along the streets heeding no one; running against people here and there; blinded by misery, and stumbling along, till, some way or other, he got home. And then he hurried up to his own little chamber, locked and double-locked the door, threw himself upon the bed, and groaned and cried aloud.

She was not dead. They carried her through the fresh air to the coach, and as the breeze played upon her temples she gave signs of life. Mr. Kingston, with a tenderness the most solicitous, but with his face filled with sorrowful gravity, supported her in his arms till they stopped at a chemist's shop; and here he, with the still speechless Caroline, carried her in, and the proper remedies were applied, which restored her to herself.

Her eyes opened; sense and motion returned. She rose, tottered a step or two, and flinging herself into Caroline's arms, they embraced without a tear.

And then Caroline begged that the coach might draw up, and they returned whence they came. Mr. Kingston again put them into the coach, and having given the coachman orders to return to Newgate, followed them into the carriage.

They arrived at the prison. The unavoidable delay had been such that Henry had arrived there before them.

They were led into the condemned cell.

It was a narrow place, and the dim light fell through the grated windows upon the pallet-bed and scanty furniture. He was sitting upon his bed when they entered, lightly fettered—a measure of custom, not of security; and as he rose, the slight metallic sound of his chain was heard; but he came forward; then, with a sweet, tranquil smile upon his countenance, and taking each, one after the other, by the hand, kissed them with a sort of solemn tenderness.

They, too, were solemn, tender, and quiet.

The immensity of the misfortune seemed to fill the mind and heart; to overwhelm as with a flood. There was no room, no inclination, for either lamentation or tears.

They all three, without speaking, sat down upon the side of the bed, Henry between the two beloved of his heart. Flavia was again encircled in one arm; hers was round him, her head leaning upon his breast. His other arm was thrown round Caroline, who sat there with her eyes fixed upon his face.

She did not speak, but she looked at him with a doubtful, asking, hesitating, perplexed look; as much as to say, Are we right? Can this be right?

And his eye answered, with gentle firmness—Yes.

After a little time thus passed, when they were becoming a little more calm—for what is there in human life, however monstrous and terrific, that the mind of man does not in a manner reconcile itself to when it *must?*—we fret against the doubtful, we submit to the inevitable—Henry began to speak, and said—

"My loves, this does not come upon me, nor, I think, upon you, unexpectedly; and I have thought very much upon what I believed must be the event of this day, and have endeavoured to look upon it, as it is in truth, but as a short parting. If it please the Lord of life to call me away, the manner, my pretty love," kissing his poor Flavia, "is but a trifling consideration. If I were about to die of sickness, you would be very sorry to lose me, but you would submit. Forget the horror of this way of leaving the world: it comes to the same thing."

"Ah! ah!" said the poor young thing, shuddering.

"Don't let us think of that, love. A short passage of anguish, and then think of me as you do think of me. I know and trust that Word, which, however in our prosperity and joy we may be insensible to the true, real value of, we

fly to in the day of distress, and find in it light and support. Nothing but a firm conviction of the aims and purposes of this life; that it is, indeed, a field of struggle and trial, by which those faculties alone are and can be developed which fit and prepare us for a purer and higher system of existence; nothing but this conviction, deeply impressed upon the mind, can bear a man through the dark passages of life unhurt. Courage, fortitude, firmness—nay, indifference and insensibility—may help him to endure with the bravery of a stoic; but nothing but the everlasting hope can make death smile: yes, my sweetest love, smile, when it is met for the sake of duty and love."

Thus he talked to them, gently and tenderly, and his words flowed like balm upon the anguish of their wounds; and by-and-by they were all able to kneel down together in prayer, and the divine spirit of consolation visited their hearts; and the terrors and the shadows of death were softened to a pale and tender melancholy—a soft twilight, as of evening falling upon the world.

But a character such as Henry had earned for himself during a life spent as his had been is not an empty, futile thing.

Every heart within the sphere of its influence answers to the claim upon its sympathies, when the excellent of the earth fall into sudden and inexplicable difficulties. The evidence was incontrovertible, but the sense of mankind went not with the verdict. Not a single circumstance was put forward to impugn it, and yet not one creature was satisfied. Judge, jury, counsel for the prosecution, shared, in spite of themselves, in the general dissatisfaction, and writhed under the thought that Henry Wilmington must suffer. And yet no one seemed to have energy sufficient to attempt to avert his fate.

People are sadly too prone to acquiesce in what they deplore, when, according to the common course of things, no means present themselves to avert the doom; but there are more warm and ardent natures who resist to the death the course of evil, and never allow the terrible wrong to be effected till they have spent the last drop of their blood, the last effort of their spirit, to avert it.

Lord George, with all his faults, was of this generous, high-spirited temper.

She was sitting opposite to the old lady now, busily employed in knitting a rug for Crab, her mistress's crossest and most favoured canine pet. The rain beat against the windows, and the wind blew, and it sounded very dreary without, and the old lady dozed and grumbled in her chair, but without any ill-humour against her friend, whom she loved and valued very much.

The door opened, and an old serving-man, who had been unnumbered years in the family, entered in his riding dress. He had been to make purchases at the distant market-town, and he came with the usual waiter, with change for bank-notes, and all sorts of little bottles and parcels, such as old ladies usually have to send for when any one goes to town; and having rendered his accounts in a low tone, lest he should disturb his mistress, he concluded by producing a newspaper.

Mrs. Simcoe, though she could very well exist without newspapers, yet always, like every other recluse, was glad enough to hear a little news; and John, when he went once a month or fortnight to town, usually indulged her by bringing one back.

"Well, I'm very glad you've brought me the 'Times,'" said she, "it has such a great deal in it; and one's glad now and then of a bit of news."

"I brought it to-day, ma'am, because they were all saying as how the best report of the great trial everybody's a-talking on is to be found in it."

"What great trial? You never told me a word of it."

"Why, ma'am, it's the first I ever heerd of it myself, though I'm rather fond of trials. I think they're often some of the curiousest things in life, particularly about wills. I've heard such strange stories about them sort of things, and the finding out the forgeries and so on with the mark in a bit of paper, or a seal instead of a wafer, or a candle that a man had, or had not, in his hand. But this ain't so wonderful as those, only for the high previous character of the gentleman condemned, and what happened in the court. It's enough to draw tears, ma'am. I thought you'd like to read it."

He gave her the paper; and she stooped down by the blazing fire, and began to turn it about.

"That page, ma'am; there it is. 'The King *versus* Wilmington.'"

"Good gracious me!" and she eagerly fastened upon the page. She read it with an eagerness and impatience which hardly allowed her to dwell upon the circumstances of the case. Above all, she devoured the words of the defence; and

at once the conviction, the certainty, that Henry Wilmington was, must be, unjustly accused and convicted, seized her mind; she had not the slightest doubt of that fact; and she grew pale, and her eyes were distended with horror at the idea of so dreadful a fate.

She loved Henry Wilmington devotedly. He had been her best, her only friend. When she was in the deepest affliction, helpless, and abandoned, as it were, by all the world, he had rescued her from misery; had enabled her to provide helps and comforts for her sick and dying daughter; had placed her in an honourable situation near his friend; and in the daily intercourse thus arising, had proved himself, by a thousand acts, the kindest, the most considerate, the most generous of mankind. True, she had lately lost sight of him; but who's fault was that? Only her own: her dislike to writing. And now this excellent young man, this pious, this generous, this honourable being, was about to die a horrible death as a criminal.

Her agitation was so excessive that she was some time before she could collect her thoughts sufficiently to proceed; till at last, prompted by that earnest curiosity with which the attention is riveted, and the mind seems forced to pursue the details of such a case, however painful, she continued her perusal, and read the reply of the counsel for the prosecution and the charge of the judge.

The charge, which was extremely well and clearly given by the reporter for the paper she held in her hand, arrested her attention.

She was a remarkably acute, clear-headed woman. The counsel for the prosecution had said, "No defence can avail the prisoner, unless he who, by the evidence produced, is alone proved to have been, of all in the house at the time, capable of so delicate an imitation of another's hand, can show that this was not the fact; that any one else besides himself entered that dining-room during that precise period, or can prove undeniably that he himself was not there: neither of which points is there the shadow of an attempt upon the part of the defence to prove."

This speech, and the charge, which was a most lucid detail of the circumstantial evidence, which in the opinion of the judge amounted as nearly as possible to demonstration, twice, thrice, she read over with a beating heart. The mention of her own name startled her. First she was thankful that she could hardly write at all, and blessed the circumstance as she saw it mentioned; then her not being summoned as evidence was mentioned. Terrified at the idea of appearing in any

character in a court of justice, she could not help rejoicing in her obscurity, when it suddenly occurred to her, what evidence, had she been summoned, could she have given?

What, in fact, of the events of that morning could she have recollected?

She reflected for a few moments.

She had never thought of the events of that morning from that day to this; for though one or two had seemed to her odd at the time, she had connected them with nothing, and they had excited no further attention.

But now, suddenly, as if illuminated by a flash of light, they recurred to her mind.

She dropped the newspaper, clasped her hands, and started from her chair uttering a faint cry.

"What's the matter?" said the dozing old lady; "I wish you wouldn't disturb me so," and turning her head upon the cushion, resumed her doze.

Mrs. Simcoe sank back again into her seat.

The idea that Harry Wilmington was guilty, she from the first moment had discarded from her mind as impossible. Now the expression used by the judge in his charge, that there was not an attempt to account for the undeniable fact in any other manner; not a suspicion offered that any one else could have been guilty of it, struck her still more forcibly. That another, whom to her astonishment she found never once mentioned, had actually been in the house that morning, was the first recollection that awoke a whole train of circumstances, as it were, in her mind, that he might, that he could be—the conviction gathered strength with every fresh reflection—that he *was* the real criminal.

And then, as if a mist had cleared away, all became revealed clearly to her mind: she saw, she comprehended the whole story: the courageous piety of the innocent son, the guilt, the infamous cowardice of the vain and unprincipled father.

She knew both the men well, and the fact was to her demonstrated.

But could anything be done? Was it, or was it not, yet too late?

She was a woman of energy, much active virtue, and a strong sense of justice. She possessed the means to convict the real criminal, and exonerate the innocent victim: if too late to save his life, his memory should yet be spared.

On the eventful day upon which the fate of so many depended, Mrs. Simcoe was sitting at her work in a small sort of closet-room, at the end of the passage, and which, having a glass door, commanded a view of the street and

parlour-doors; though, the passage being a long one, a person sitting there could not hear any conversation that might happen to pass in the hall, unless it were in a very loud voice.

She was that day engaged in mending house linen. She recollected perfectly the occasion, and the reason for her having settled herself there. Her master had had a bad attack about eight o'clock that morning; and though he was now better, and her attendance dispensed with, she had brought her work to this place, as more in the way if wanted than if in her room on the basement story.

She distinctly remembered the bell ringing and a knock at the door about eleven o'clock; that Charles opened the door, and let in Mr. Henry Wilmington, who immediately went up to her master's room.

She saw Charles come down, followed by young Mr. Wilmington, who seemed to be giving him directions. Charles went out; Mr. Henry Wilmington remained a short time walking up and down the hall, as if musing—it might be about five minutes—when there was another knock at the door. She was rising to answer it, when she saw Mr. Henry Wilmington, who was standing by, open the door, and Mr. Wilmington senior come in, seeming in haste. A few words passed, on which Mr. Henry seemed in much grief; Mr. Wilmington went into the dining-parlour, and Mr. Henry very hastily again ran up-stairs.

She had left on the dining-room sideboard drawer some dinner napkins which she wished to look over, and it might be about half-an-hour after this that she went to the room to fetch them. She found the door locked; on trying the lock, a voice she knew to be Mr. Wilmington's asked who was there, but upon her begging pardon for the interruption and going away, no further notice was taken. About an hour after this, she heard Mr. Henry Wilmington coming down-stairs; the dining-room door was unlocked, and Mr. Wilmington came out and met his son in the hall.

Mr. Henry seemed in a great hurry, as well as his father, calling out that he should lose the coach; and snatching up his hat, and throwing his great-coat over his arm, he almost ran out of the house; upon which Mr. Wilmington shut the door after him, and returned to the dining-room, locking the door again.

In about two hours more, she heard him softly unlock the room door, creep out in a stealthy manner, and let himself out of the house, shutting the hall-door in so noiseless a way that she perfectly well remembered going to the lock, to satisfy herself that it had really been fastened, after which

she went into the dining-room, and distinctly remembered that all the drawers in the bureau were shut, and the bunch of keys was lying upon the table.

Thus, by a curious chain of those small circumstances by which truth is demonstrated, it was proved, that so far from having had leisure to accomplish the crime, Harry Wilmington, from the time he had heard of Mr. Craiglethorpe's death, until the day of the funeral, when he entered it to hear the will read, had never once been in that room, where alone the paper could possibly have been executed, and that his innocence was clear as the sun at noonday.

The course of this world is not altogether, yet upon the average, after all, retributive. Not in vain does a man lead a just and honourable life; not useless are the esteem and gratitude of those whom he has frequented. Circumstances are often most unpropitious; and in one sense the wisdom of Solomon appears true, that there is one event to the good and to the wicked. It is not according to the course of the present world's government, as far as we can understand it, that what we may call the blind forces of the imposed natural laws, or the still blinder workings, as they seem to us, of chance and accident, should swerve aside, in condescension to the great spiritual and moral laws of desert and justice; but there are moral laws themselves which, spiritual and impalpable as they are, act with still more imperative force upon the fate of human beings, even in this world, than the inexorable material laws themselves with which we find ourselves surrounded.

The chain of fatal circumstances, and his own admirable piety, had brought the innocent and excellent man to this dreadful doom; but the force of that character he had acquired for himself, the strength of that esteem and affection his generous and disinterested temper had excited among the few who knew him personally, were such, that the law was arrested in its course; its terrible, almost irresistible march was stopped; that dread abstraction was forced to pause before the still mightier force of that universal opinion that declared its sentence, however founded, unjust, because crime by such a man was impossible.

The energy of persuasion with which Lord George pleaded for a reprieve in order to afford time for a further investiga-

tion of circumstances, the agony of entreaty with which Mr. Craiglethorpe seconded him, the universal feeling in every one acquainted with the parties, exercised an influence to which there was a moral impossibility that the persons with whom the decision of this matter lay should not yield.

A reprieve was granted.

The same certainty, the same absolute positive conviction, brought the avenger of blood up from the remote and distant corner where she lay secluded.

Mrs. Simcoe, shuddering with horror at the idea of the fate awaiting her benefactor, too impatient to lose a moment; an earnest, determined woman, whom no difficulty could deter from what she thought her duty; having collected her thoughts a little, arranged the circumstances as she recollected them by degrees, and convinced that she possessed evidence sufficient to save this admirable man from this cruel fate, sensible that an instant was not to be lost, rose from her chair, and proceeded to the unheard-of daring of awaking Mrs. Widdington from her doze.

It was as much as her place was worth.

The selfish old lady was excessively cross at being disturbed, and would have been so at any accident that might have produced such inconvenience; but she was deeply offended, and her pride all in arms, at the idea that any one, far less her humble attendant, should have ventured upon such an audacious step with regard to her.

She lifted up her head from the cushion and looked terribly angry.

"All is lost," thought poor Mrs. Simcoe; "but what does that matter, may I but obtain the means of reaching the Great North Road, and sending an express to London, which I will follow as speedily myself?"

"Madam," she began, in a tone of entreaty, "only listen to me a few words, I beseech you."

But it was long before the offended old woman could be brought to listen.

At length Mrs. Simcoe gained her ear, and soon, to her unspeakable delight, found she had excited her interest.

The tale of so much goodness, so much piety, unjustly sentenced for another's crime, was briefly told; but it was of a nature to arouse every right feeling in the human breast: that natural sense of justice, which is perhaps the strongest and most enduring among any which we may class as the *natural* moral sentiments, was aroused.

Such a tale! of a man so admirable thus involved, through mistaken circumstances and his own filial piety; of the con-

trast between the character and the fate of such a being; told with its full effect upon a mind but rarely called upon to think of or sympathise with others, but in which the better part of our nature rather slumbered from inaction than was utterly lost. Her impatience, when she understood the state of the case, almost equalled that of Mrs. Simcoe herself; her horses, her servants, her well-filled purse, were at once placed at her friend's disposal.

The old lady seemed quite revived by the delightful sensation of awakened benevolence, by the idea of assisting in so righteous and pious a work, as she walked across the floor with alacrity, unlocked her bureau, filled a large purse with guineas, and a pocket-book with bank-notes, and pressing them into Mrs. Simcoe's hands, bid God bless her enterprise, and told her to spare no expense, and when she wanted more money to send for it at once, and she should have it. "Heartily! heartily!" was the word.

Mrs. Simcoe, in less than an hour, was on her way, leaving Mrs. Widdington sitting upright in her chair, more alive, more excited, more content, more cheerful than she had been for years; whilst the housemaid made her tea and toast with a sort of trembling joy at her mistress's good humour.

Help was at hand for the innocent. The avenging spirit had already stricken the guilty. It was Caroline's painful, almost insupportable task, to pass from the calm presence of the man about to die to that of the real criminal, who had escaped. She had to announce the event of the trial to the distracted man, racked by mental and bodily pain, torn by all the agonies which cowardice, remorse, and the horrible anguish of a heart which had a father's feelings, yet was altogether wanting in a father's generosity and courage. He turned and tossed, a ghastly spectacle, upon his bed, unable even to lift his eye and look upon that daughter, who, pale as marble, and almost as motionless, stood with dry and tearless eyes before him.

A strong mind and a feeling heart would have broken sooner than did this. The struggles of the feeble in such a case are more enduring. Two days and two nights this wretched man, a pray to horror and despair, lay stretched upon that dreadful bed; whilst his wife, perfectly bewildered at this catastrophe—of the true history of which she was, it

must be said, perfectly unsuspicious—waited upon him, or ran and hid herself in her room, to strain handkerchiefs round her aching head, and groan in helpless misery. She was too utterly benumbed and bewildered even to give way to her usual selfishness; she seemed as if she hardly knew what she did.

On the day originally fixed for the awful sentence of the law to take effect, Mr. Wilmington expired.

The strong-minded and pious daughter had watched through this dreadful scene. It was vain to urge upon her father to have recourse to that spiritual assistance from another from which he shrank with that kind of aversion which men, who have neglected all serious preparation for eternity during their lives, too often display at the hour of death; but it would appear that she had herself attempted the difficult task of endeavouring to excite some better feelings in the departing soul, and that to a certain degree she had succeeded in awakening some sense of his true situation. He died with more calmness than might have been expected, blessing his children.

Did Caroline take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded to obtain a confession of his guilt? to rend aside that veil which the piety of the generous son had thrown over a criminal father?

What would you have done in such a case?

I would have done what Caroline did.

She, after one of her long conversations with her father, dictated to him a confession of the truth, which she wrote out and read over to him. She took the precaution to have it signed in the presence of one or two of the upper servants, ignorant of its contents. She had their signatures appended. She then, in their presence, sealed up the paper in a cover, and directing it to Mr. Kingston, with a request that he would keep it for her till she demanded it, despatched it immediately by the butler, who had not left the room till the business was completed.

She resolved to make use of it, if necessary, to rescue her brother.

But Mrs. Simcoe's arrival in town rendered so painful a step unnecessary. Her evidence was laid before the Home Office. Not a doubt could remain as to the real criminal. To publish the father's guilt was but to punish, under another

form, the innocent victims of his follies and his crimes. A full pardon was granted to Henry; with the addition that, there being reason to be convinced, without the shadow of a doubt, that he was innocent of the crime alleged, and the prosecutor having earnestly represented and deplored the error under which he had acted, a full and free pardon—all the reparation the law could make to an unjustly-condemned man—was granted.

Henry, and his wife, and his sister, retired to their beloved seclusion. Time, with its soft and healing hand, gradually effaced the cruel history; but sin leaves traces indelible in our mysterious life. The father's sins cast their shadow over the children.

There was a subdued gravity, a certain composed seriousness, about them all, when I saw them some years after.

They always lived retired; but they were deeply and tenderly beloved by all who knew them; and the example of their lives has left behind it, in that remote county where they dwelt, a bright impression, which has not yet worn out, and which to this day exercises a most beneficial effect upon the circle of its influence.

THE END.

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